

U. N. renews Cyprus force and looks to new negotiations

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The Security Council on Monday renewed the mandate of the 1,200-member U.N. peacekeeping force in Cyprus until June 30, 1997 and called for steps to facilitate a new diplomatic drive to reunite the divided island.

The resolution was adopted unanimously, without any speeches.

Cyprus has been virtually partitioned into a Greek Cypriot south and a Turkish Cypriot north since troops from Turkey landed in 1974 in reaction to a coup in Nicosia backed by the military junta then ruling Greece.

The U.N. peacekeeping force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was deployed in 1964 to halt violence between the two communities after a government comprising representatives of both broke up three years after independence from Britain.

The United Nations has been trying for years to bring the two sides back together in a bizonal, bi-communal federation.

The council resolution deplored a series of incidents in recent months in which three Greek Cypriot civilians and a Turkish Cypriot soldier were killed, saying violence along the ceasefire lines had "reached a level not seen since 1974."

It called on both sides to

accept a package of measures designed to ease tensions, including unarming military posts in close proximity, halting the presence of loaded weapons along the ceasefire lines and adopting a code of conduct based on minimal force and proportional response.

It also reiterated grave concern over "the excessive levels of military forces and armaments" and lack of progress towards a significant reduction in the number of foreign troops. The council called on all concerned to commit themselves to a reduction in defence spending and in the foreign troop strength.

The Greek Cypriot-led government recently acquired a number of tanks and other heavy weapons and is reported to be planning to buy Russian-made S-300 air defence missiles, while some 30,000 Turkish troops are still in northern Cyprus.

The council reiterated that the present situation on the island is unacceptable and welcomed efforts by the U.N. special representative for Cyprus, Han Song-Joo of South Korea, to prepare the ground for "open-ended direct negotiations in the first half of 1997" between the leaders of the two communities on an overall settlement.

UAE bans foreign lawyers from courts

DUBAI (R) — A law banning foreign lawyers from appearing in United Arab Emirates (UAE) courts has gone into effect, but lawyers said on Tuesday they hoped for an extension of the deadline.

Issued in December 1991, the law set Dec. 23, 1996 as the cut-off date banning expatriate lawyers from courts, allowing only national lawyers to appear before judges.

"Things are a bit slow in the courts at the moment as foreign lawyers have to find local lawyers to represent their clients," a UAE lawyer said.

"There is a feeling that the authorities may review the law and give a year or two extension," he added.

"There is concern that things will really slow down. We are hoping for an extension," said another.

Expatriate lawyers — mainly from Egypt, Jordan, Sudan and Syria — make up the bulk of lawyers in the oil-rich UAE.

"In Dubai and Sharjah local lawyers make up roughly 20 per cent of practising lawyers, but in other emirates the figure is much lower and possibly zero in some emirates," one said.

The Gulf Today newspaper quoted Under-secretary of Justice Sultan Saeed Al Badi as saying the decision was in line with President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan's instructions "to nationalise jobs and preserve justice and stability in the UAE."

"He said the grace period was enough and the ministry encouraged nationals to practise this profession. The cabinet

agreed to give them monthly financial incentives," it said, without giving details.

Most national lawyers do not go into private practice on graduating, choosing instead to become prosecutors or in-house legal counsellors in federal ministries, lawyers said.

Hebron — seen through a child's eyes

HEBRON (R) — "Hey, Arab, I'm gonna beat you up," cries a Jewish settler.

The threat is shouted in Hebron, a flashpoint between Arab and Jew, but few take it seriously. The "settler" is barely six years old.

He is waiting for the bullet-proof school bus on Hebron's Martyrs Street, where Palestinian traffic is banned, when an Arab schoolboy passes by on the other side.

The Jewish child runs up behind the Palestinian, who walks on, head down. The Israeli soldiers guarding the shiny Jewish houses during the centre of this West Bank town take no notice. "Kids," says one with a shrug.

More boys with bright skulls run past the machinegun positions and road spikes to catch the grille-fronted bus which duly arrives with an army jeep escort.

The bus speeds down the hill to the next Jewish enclave on its way to Kiryat Arba settlement on the edge of town, where children learn that Hebron, a city of more than 100,000 Palestinians, is theirs since the time of Abraham.

The younger children on the bus jostle and josh each other, oblivious of being watched. The older ones are suspicious of reporters. Their parents have told them the media are hostile to them.

But one 12-year-old girl, Shlomit, is confident. "My dream is that Hebron will be built without Arabs," she says, as Palestinian faces and homes flash by. "We can't live in peace with them... they don't want to live in peace, they are trying to murder us so why should we try to live with them?"

How does she harbour such notions of apartheid? Why does a youngster threaten a Palestinian schoolboy outside his front door?

"We can't ignore the fact that they have grown up with hatred on the side of the Arabs," says Shani Horowitz, one of the mothers who puts her children

on the school bus each morning on Martyrs Street.

"That hatred started from the Arabs... that is why sometimes they like to show their own muscle and try to show that they have strength and can stand up against this hatred," says Ms. Horowitz, an immigrant from the United States who moved to central Hebron 14 years ago.

"My children love this place with all their hearts," Ms. Horowitz says. "They identify with what we are doing here."

Just what they are doing in Hebron is a major point of contention delaying the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

Palestinians say settlers are "stealing" their land by force to prevent its return to Arab rule. The settlers say they are "redeeming" the land promised them in the Bible.

"Hebron is the root of the entire land of Israel," maintains Moshe Bleicher, head of the Jewish religious college which has taken over a Palestinian high school and Hebron's central bus station, just down the street from the Horowitzs.

"We shall fight for Hebron as the land of Israel. There is no difference between Hebron and Tel Aviv," he says. The 200 students at Bleicher's college make up about half the Jews in central Hebron, many of whom walk around with Uzi sub-machineguns.

The guns, the sealed Arab streets and shops around the settler enclaves, the sidelong glances of fear or contempt from both sides make Hebron a grim place. But Ms. Horowitz, like many of the 130,000 settlers in the West Bank and Gaza, is on a mission from God.

Her seven children have a good life, they know nothing else, she says. They are learning Jewish spiritual values, not the budding American-style consumerism of Tel Aviv, she says proudly. She denies living in a self-imposed ghetto from where her chil-

dren see only a distorted image of Arabs and the Western world.

Most of the children on the bus have never spoken to a Palestinian. They move behind bullet-proof glass from central Hebron to fenced-in Kiryat Arba where they learn and play. If they ride a bike or walk in the street, a soldier stands guard.

"It wasn't always like this," laments Ms. Horowitz, who says that before the Palestinian uprising and the 1993 self-rule Oslo accord she could walk all over the city. Now Palestinians are threatened if they cooperate with the settlers who have become the target of stones and bullets, she says.

"I constantly emphasise to my children that not every Palestinian is a terrorist. As you see we have Palestinians working here building a Jewish home right in our backyard."

She agrees the workers are desperate for money because of the closures of the West Bank. "What's more on their mind is to make their money and eat their food and no big thoughts of Palestinian government."

Those thoughts were put into their head by us, well, not by us, but by our government and the leftists and by (Yasser) Arafat," she adds.

And what thoughts are in the heads of the children on the bus?

"We are doing the Arabs a favour by letting them live here," says Shlomit. "If they throw a stone at me or shoot at me, why should I allow them (to live here)?" she asks.

Alaa Jaabary, who sees Shlomit's bus from the window of his dour apartment house, does not think he is being done a favour by being allowed to live in what he regards as his own country.

"I dream to live like them," he says of the settlers as he prepares to walk to his united nations-run school. "It's our land and they have more freedom than us."

The Jaabary home is near

the Ibrahim Mosque, a site holy to Jews and Muslims. Settlers have been taking over houses near the site since Israel captured the West Bank in 1967. A local market has been closed and restrictions on Arabs tightened since U.S.-born settler haruch goldstein killed 30 Muslims praying at the site's al-Ibrahimi mosque nearly three years ago.

"We can't do anything," complains 11-year-old Alaa. "Even in our courtyard they will not let us play. We used to go and play in the market. Now they took it all. We are surrounded from everywhere as if we are in a war." Alaa, his three sisters and brother share the same fear of being attacked by the other side as the Jewish youngsters.

In interviews they reel off a litany of mirror-image complaints of violence, intolerance and incomprehension. But they nurture a deep sense of injustice, that the settlers, with Israeli and foreign backing, are gnawing away at their land and lives.

"They don't want co-existence," says Alaa's elder sister Shireen. "They make us feel by their look that we are living in their country. They always make problems for us."

Will life improve if the stalled deal on an Israeli troop pullback from 80 per cent of Hebron is reached? "No," interjects their mother intisar Jaabary. "The settlers will still be here. They do not want to live with US as equals."

"The settlers will have to leave," adds her husband Shihed Jaabary. "Only Jews who accept to live under Palestinian authority rule can live alongside us. The others can go back to Tel Aviv. We have nowhere else but here." The kids' expectations of self-rule are simple — somewhere to play unharassed and someone to stand up for them.

"We'll have our own soldiers," Alaa says of the Palestinian police. "Of course, they may beat us too," he adds thoughtfully, "but they won't put us in jail."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bahrain to form national guard

MANAMA (R) — Bahrain plans to form a national guard force to boost its security, Crown Prince Sheikh Hamad Ben Isa Al Khalifa was on Tuesday quoted as saying. "To strengthen security and stability and to increase safety of the country and the resiliency, an emiri decree will be issued to form a national guard force," said Sheikh Hamad, who is also commander in chief of Bahrain's defence force. Local newspapers said Sheikh Hamad was speaking on Monday. The island, which celebrated its silver jubilee on Dec. 16, faces civil unrest by members of its majority Shi'ite Muslims seeking political and economic reforms. Around 27 people have been killed in two years of sporadic protests, violence and arson attacks. Hundreds of people have also been detained.

U. S. concerned over Iran-Turkey trade deals

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States voiced concern on Monday at NATO ally Turkey's decision to sign economic agreements with Iran last week in defiance of U.S. calls to isolate Tehran. "We remain concerned... by all efforts to intensify cooperative relations with Iran until Tehran reforms its unacceptable international policies," State Department Spokesman Glyn Davies said. The United States accuses Iran of being the most active state sponsor of anti-Western terrorism. It also faults Tehran for opposing the Middle East process and allegedly seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction. "The Turkish government knows well our concerns, we communicate them to them frequently, and we will maintain an active dialogue with the government of Turkey," Mr. Davies told reporters at the department's daily briefing. The agreements, designed to double trade between Turkey and Iran to \$2 billion, were signed near the end of a four-day visit to Turkey last week by Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Netanyahu to meet Pope in January

ROME (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will meet Pope John Paul II in Rome during a visit at the end of January, the Italian news agency ANSA reported Monday. In an interview he gave to an Italian television station to be transmitted on Jan. 1, Mr. Netanyahu is quoted as saying: "I will be in Rome at the end of January and on this occasion I will naturally also meet the Pope and visit the Vatican."

Israel reports 'worrisome' drop in migrants from West

The Jerusalem Post

THERE HAS been a "worrisome" drop of some 10 per cent in the number of immigrants from the West this year, Jewish Agency Chairman Avraham Burg said yesterday. In the first 11 months of 1996, the number of immigrants from the U.S. and Canada stood at 2,780 as compared with 3,218 in the same period last year, he said. This was true of all the Western countries except France, where the number rose in January-November 1996 to 2,103 as compared with 1,885 in the same period of the previous year. Mr. Burg said the agency was preparing a five-year plan, together with the gov-

ernment, to encourage immigration from the West. "To complete the mosaic that is Israel," he said, another 250,000-500,000 Jews from the West should come here, at least on a partial basis such as having a second home in Israel.

On the other hand, the statistics for the first 11 months of 1996 showed that the trend in immigration from the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) remained stable at about five per cent of the remaining Jewish population in the former Soviet Union, he said. By the end of this month, therefore, the total aliya for 1996 from the CIS is expected to reach approximately 58,000.

British troops in Gulf war given secret injections — report

LONDON (AFP) —

British soldiers serving in the 1991 allied campaign against Iraq were given secret, still unidentified injections against biological warfare agents, a press report said here Tuesday.

The Independent said it had been told that "five or six" injections were not recorded on the troops' medical records and have still not been formally acknowledged by the Ministry of

Defence (MoD).

Campaigners fighting for the ailment known as Gulf war syndrome to be recognised, fear that some of the injections could have been experimental, the paper noted.

It added that the Royal Air Force medical expert appointed to investigate veterans' complaints was unaware of them.

In a recent private session of the House of Commons select committee on defence, an

opposition Labour deputy asked the Surgeon-General Tony Revell how many vaccinations the MoD had not admitted to, according to the Independent.

He reportedly replied that the number was five or six. Earlier this month, the MoD acknowledged having unwittingly misled parliament on the extent of its use of toxic chemical pesticides in the Gulf war.

The organo-phosphate pesticides are among elements being blamed for Gulf war syndrome, a basket of neurological and psychological symptoms reported by many British veterans of the 1991 allied campaign against Iraq.

The disclosure came after Britain launched a double-barrel three-year study into the causes and effects of the syndrome.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05Snowwhite
14:30Circus
15:00Joux — Pyramid
15:30Christmas Ceremonies
16:00 Doc. — Earth Revealed
16:30Blizzard Island
17:00News Flash
17:02The Adventures and
Kelly
18:00Ushuaia
19:00Le Journal
19:15Magazine — Sports
Et Musique
19:30News Headlines
19:35Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00Challenges
21:10NBA Basketball
22:00News in English
22:25Cobra
23:59Hart to Hart
00:45 Comedy — Who's The Boss?

PRAYER TIMES

05:06Fajr
06:28Sunrise/Duha
11:35Dhuhr
14:19Asr
16:42Maghreh
18:05Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifelh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Temperatures are expected to rise further with clouds appearing at different altitudes, and winds southwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds southerly moderate and seas rough.

Amman05/19

Aqaba11/25

Deserts04/20

Jordan Valley12/24
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 17, Aqaba 23 Humidity readings: Amman 57 per cent, Aqaba 40 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi893542
Dr. Nasser Ibrahim830432
Dr. Bahjat Bader832642
Dr. Khalil Al Tusluq757253
Firas pharmacy661912
Ferdows pharmacy890280
Al Asema pharmacy637055
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoukh pharmacy623672
Najib pharmacy847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu281484
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Tareq Hijawi985445
Khalifah pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 190
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade617101

Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone Reports623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, 644281/6
Aldikh Maternity, 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir,775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 109983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Jbn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) infor-

mation department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08(53250).

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

08:35Jeddah (RJ)
08:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:45 Larnaca, Damascus (RJ)
11:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
15:30 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

16:25Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
16:25London (RJ)
17:35Brussels, Vienna (RJ)
18:10Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
18:10Rome (RJ)
18:22Rome (add) (RJ)
18:45Paris, Geneva (RJ)
19:10Madrid, Berlin (RJ)
19:15Istanbul (RJ)
19:50 Singapore, Jakarta (add) (RJ)

23:10Beirut (RJ)
23:59Jeddah (RJ)
00:10Cairo (RJ)
03:30Jeddah (add) (RJ)
03:55 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights
09:30Cairo (MS)
10:00Sanaa, Hudaidah (TY)
10:30Jeddah (SV)
12:35 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)

12:40Abu Dhabi (GF)
13:30Tunis (TU)
15:05Vienna (OS)
15:45Algiers (AH)
20:10Beirut (ME)
21:00Paris, Damascus (AF)
21:40Tel Aviv (LY)
22:20Larnaca (CY)
22:45Athens, Beirut (OA)
23:10Istanbul (TK)
23:15Amsterdam (KL)
01:55London (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
09:20Aqaba (RW)
18:55Tel Aviv (RW)

DEPARTURES
03:00Jeddah (RJ)
05:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
10:15Rome (add) (RJ)
10:40Berlin, London (RJ)
11:25Casablanca (RJ)
13:00Istanbul (RJ)
19:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
19:35Beirut (RJ)
19:45Colombo (RJ)
20:00Bombay (RJ)
20:05Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:10Cairo (RJ)
20:30New Delhi (RJ)
21:00Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)
21:15Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:30Jeddah (add) (RJ)
22:45Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights
11:00Hudaidah, Sanaa (TY)
12:00Jeddah (SV)

13:30Bahrain, Abu Dhabi (GF)
13:50Beirut, Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
14:30Tunis (TU)
15:50Vienna (OS)
16:30Sharjah (AH)
22:50Tel Aviv (LY)
23:10Larnaca (CY)
23:55Damascus, Paris (AF)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
09:50Marka (RW)
20:50Aqaba (RW)

MARKET PRICES
Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple700/500
Banana550/550
Banana (imported)850/600
Cabbage60/40
Carrot260/120
Cauliflower130/100
Cucumber (large)120/80
Cucumber (small)210/160
Eggplant140/80
Garlic850/600
Grape fruit150/100
Lemon390/250
Marrow (large)80/40
Marrow (small)130/100
Onion (green)160/180
Onion (dry)170/80
Orange560/400
Pepper (hot)240/150
Pepper (sweet)190/100
Potato260/160
Spinach150/100
String Bean370/300
Tomato150/100

Princess commends disability awareness

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Basma Tuesday commended an increasing public awareness of the importance of cooperation and solidarity among all sectors of the Kingdom, according to a Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) statement.

The Princess spoke during a QAF ceremony held at the King Abdullah Mosque's Islamic Cultural Centre in which prizes were distributed for the 1996 Hashemite Competition for Health and Social Solidarity.

She described the competition as a model of cooperation between public and private institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as a viable approach in promoting disabled awareness while providing needed rehabilitative assistance, the statement said.

The Princess affirmed that the support QAF receives enables the fund to serve local communities in all parts of the Kingdom.

She also mentioned Al-Bir Wal-Ihsan Charity Campaign, due to be organised by the QAF during the month of Ramadan, while thanking the organisations

and individuals who contributed to the success of the competition.

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Abdel Salam Al Ahdabi spoke at the ceremony, stating that the competition represents the highly successful approach of consolidating the national development process and providing assistance and support to groups with special needs.

He described the competition as one of the bright features of Islamic teachings, which calls for helping the needy in all possible ways, the statement said.

The minister expressed his appreciation for the QAF development initiatives and projected that the success of this competition is indicative of the success expected in the Bir Wal-Ihsan Charity Campaign.

QAF Executive Director Awni Bashir said this year's competition, which aimed at helping the deaf and promoting public awareness of hearing protection, has achieved its objectives, the statement said.

He stated that approximately 250,000 people took part in the competition which helped secure funds



HRH Princess Basma Tuesday distributes a prize to one of the winners of a Queen Alia Fund for Social Development competition. The competition attempts to promote disability awareness and solidarity among all sectors of Jordanian society (Petra photo).

needed for programmes aimed at deaf rehabilitation in the schools in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.

At the end of the ceremony, the Princess distributed prizes to the competition winners and shields and certificates for the institutions and individuals who

provided the prizes as well as for those who took part in organising the competition.

A total of 45 prizes, with an estimated value of JD 15,000, were distributed, the statement said.

The QAF organises the competition which annually

targets a certain disability: deaf awareness being this year's theme.

The competition aims at promoting public awareness of the importance of supporting those in need, and enhancing a sense of solidarity among all sectors of society.

CDD issues warning as to water pump usage

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Civil Defence Department (CDD) officials Tuesday confirmed that suffocation incidents resulting from water pump motors, used for maintaining wells, have been on the increase.

"We have noted a constant repetition and increase in this kind of accident this year, which caused the unfortunate deaths and injury of dozens of people," First Lieutenant Aref Tarawneh of the Prevention

Awareness Department (PAD) at the CDD, said.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Lieut. Tarawneh referred to a Monday incident in Irbid in which two people inhaled poisonous gases while attempting to clean a water well in the area of Kufer Assad.

The two, identified as Hani Abdul Rahim, 38, and

his brother, Abdul Laif, 25, were listed in fair condition, according to CDD officials.

"Lamentably, [in many cases] people who want to clean or maintain a water well decide to take a water pump with them inside the well and begin pumping without following any safety measures," Lieut. Tarawneh said.

"These individuals are not aware that poisonous gases are emitting from the water pump in the process," he explained.

The CDD official described poisonous gases as consuming the existing oxygen, "and the tight space in which these individuals find themselves forces them to inhale carbon dioxide."

He urged extra precautionary measures in using pumping motors, pointing out that the safest method would be to keep the water pump outside the well

when wanting to clean or maintain a well.

"Water pumps usually have hoses attached to them and we urge people to keep the motor pumps exterior to the well and to only extend the hose to the well," he admonished.

Two weeks ago, one person was killed and four others were injured in Mafrq, through poisonous gas inhalation while maintaining a cesspool in a paper factory.

During the past six months, CDD records said four people were killed and six more were injured from inhaling carbon dioxide in several incidents involving well maintenance.

"We are constantly launching awareness campaigns to advise people on safe water pump operations, but it seems that no one is listening to our directions," Lieut. Tarawneh lamented.

CAA announces plans to upgrade travel services

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is embarking on plans for reorganising air travel services and communications slated to commence in 1997 and end in 2000, CAA Director General Jaser Ziyad announced Tuesday.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, he affirmed that the Queen Alia International Airport is slated to modernise passenger lounges, luggage handling system and other utilities.

The CAA recently announced two tenders for modernising the airport's radar system as well as the central air control facility and stated that if every-

thing runs according to schedule, by the end of 1997 these facilities as well as a new air traffic control services will be operative at the airport.

During 1996, the CAA upgraded the airport's two runways as well as the runway of the Marka airport at a total cost of JD 2 million and installed new instruments for monitoring weather conditions at the international airport, Mr. Ziyad said.

Also completed this year, was the installation of a JD 2.2 million radar system as well as a modernised passenger lounge at the northern terminal building and plans have been made for equally modernising the southern

building during 1997.

At Marka airport, the CAA chief said that new communications instruments have been installed, while at the Aqaba airport new communications equipment has been linked.

Mr. Ziyad stated that this year the CAA expects revenues to reach JD 11 million.

Last year, the CAA announced that it was allocating a total of JD 60 million dedicated to the modernisation of the three civil airports over a period of three years.

Wadi Mousa laments lack of adequate medical care

By Tanya Habjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A voluntary society of doctors offered one day of free treatment to residents in Wadi Mousa last Friday and in the process discovered a desperate need for health services and a new secondary school building.

The Jordanian Association of Health Culture (JAHC), mandated eight medical specialists, armed with pharmaceutical and dairy donations from the Dar Al Dawa pharmaceutical company and Roussel dairy company, to Wadi Mousa and they treated over 800 patients and prescribed medication to

approximately 500 others.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Dr. Hassan Badaran, an ear, nose and throat specialist and JAHC member, stated: "I treated many neglected cases of chronic allergies and ear infections and one rare case of rhinolith in one school girl, which is an illness similar to kidney stones in that a stone forms in the nose cavity, a very rare disease usually restricted to remote areas."

"[Residents] are deprived of medical care and it was our duty to treat as many cases as we could," he added.

According to Dr. Badaran, the JAHC will next write recommenda-

tions to the mayor of Wadi Mousa and the Ministry of Health.

There is currently no hospital in Wadi Mousa, a city of 20,000 residents with only two general practitioners and one visiting surgeon.

The Ministry of Health is currently appraising a site for a hospital in Tibeh, eight kilometres south of the area, but that is far away from the residents of Wadi Mousa and they are dissatisfied with the proposed location, Dr. Badaran reported.

President of the JAHC Zuhair Abu Ferris, asserted "a great need for medical help" in Wadi Mousa and further stated "high num-

bers of allergies and miscarriages from one particular school in the city."

Director of the Wadi Mousa Youth Centre Asma Tuetist spoke of the symptoms students and teachers are reporting at the Secondary School for Girls, where, she said, 35 teachers have suffered miscarriages.

"The school is built out of a [certain] wood, resulting in miscarriages and students fainting while some suffer from acute allergies," she added.

Dr. Badaran confirmed that, indeed, he had treated 30 students at the school who were diagnosed with allergies, speculating that the problem may have to do with asbestos in the build-

ing.

Ms. Tuetist stressed the need for a new school building, stating that the city had proposed a new location to the Ministry of Education, and that now "it is the responsibility of the ministry."

She also cited the Ministry of Education as responding that a new building depended on budget constraints.

Ministry of Education officials were not available for comment Tuesday.

"We are all so thankful to Dr. Abu Ferris for bringing his team to our city and now we must wait and see what improvements can be made," she said.

HUDC awards contract to local firm

AMMAN (Petra) — The Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC) Tuesday awarded a local Jordanian firm a JD 380,000 contract to lay the infrastructure for a housing estate near Zarqa, north of Amman.

HUDC Director General Yusef Hiyasat, who signed the deal with the manager of the local firm, said that the project is scheduled to achieve completion in 240 days and is to be arranged on 65 dunums of land which will be divided into 102 plots for residential and commercial purposes.

The project entails laying networks for roads and alleys over a 24,000 square metre in area, a water network of 3,500 metres in

length, a 2,000 metre sewage network, in addition to electricity, telephone networks, public gardens, retaining walls and other services for the estate, Mr. Hiyasat explained.

He said that project beneficiaries will be asked to start saving with the HUDC over the next two months so as to ensure priority status for land ownership on which they can construct their homes.

Beneficiaries must be Jordanian citizens who have not yet benefited from any previous housing project and who have no homes of their own, he said adding that HUDC takes other factors into consideration in choosing beneficiaries such as socio-economic condi-

tion and number of dependents.

Mr. Hiyasat described the project as an extension to the second phase of the Baurawi Housing Estate in the Zarqa Governorate, stressing that limited income groups will be given preference over others in the HUDC decision.

He explained that the first phase of the Baurawi Housing Estate was distributed in 1992 and thus far 342 housing units have been built in it, housing approximately 6,000 people.

The HUDC has previously implemented two housing projects in Zarqa also benefiting limited income groups.

Eco-tourism suggested as way to preserve site authenticity

By Christina Schlegel
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A partnership between architectural heritage and heritage tourism, as a means to simultaneously bolster tourism and preserve historical sites, is a necessary step in introducing eco-tourism to the Kingdom, architect Leen Fakhouri stated in a Monday lecture, sponsored by the Friends of Archaeology (FoA).

Ms. Fakhouri, who teaches at the University of Jordan Faculty of Architecture, emphasised that in view of the tourism sector's economic role in the country, the introduction of ecological tourism — a package of various plans which cause minimal damage to the environment or even have a positive impact upon it — is of vital importance.

Eco-tourism is applicable to all ancient sites to ensure that such attractions are not irreversibly harmed by mass tourism.

"But eco-tourism," she asserted, "is not only of benefit to the environment and its residents but also attracts tourists in an environmentally friendly way, [even to sites] which are not considered as the country's major attractions."

As an example, she cited the restoration of what is now known as Tayabat Zaman, where the village council approached private investors to restore old buildings and turn them into a tourist village.

"In such a case, both parties can benefit from the arrangement. At Tayabat Zaman, investors and home owners share the net profits," Ms. Fakhouri explained.

Ms. Fakhouri, who was the architectural team leader for the village restoration, said that, according to a contract between the owners and investors, the villagers own project shares and receive a fixed annual income.

After the contract expiration, they can decide

whether they want to renew the contract.

"This is a positive opportunity for the next generation to make their own decisions, in case they desire to use the houses for their own purposes."

The idea of creating a tourist village also considerably increased the land's value, Ms. Fakhouri added.

According to a study, conducted by her organisation in the first ten months of 1995, 64 new construction licences were granted as compared to 20 licences in all of 1990.

Another indicator of the economic impact of the project, Ms. Fakhouri said, is that the monthly rent for such houses quadrupled in that period from JD 25 to its current average rate of JD 100.

"Eco-tourism," she maintained, "is also a way to create new jobs without people having to leave their village and move to the city."

In case of Tayabat Zaman, all construction workers

were hired from the village itself.

Additionally, 70 per cent of the staff managing the tourist village is recruited from the town.

Handicrafts are also made and sold by local women.

However, Ms. Fakhouri prioritised the increase of environmental public awareness and the value it represents.

"We must strengthen popular pride of our heritage," she said.

Ms. Fakhouri added that a modern living standard seems more meaningful to many people than the restoration of old houses.

We also lack documented experience to avoid repeating the same mistakes, she stated. She cited the example of the Dana natural reserve, where parts of a village were restored two years ago.

"What is missing is documentation about the work process, a plan of action and studies as to how they handled the whole mechanism," Ms. Fakhouri

remonstrated.

Another problem, she noted, is that any site, which was built during and subsequent to the 18th century is not officially protected by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

"If we can establish a partnership between architectural heritage and tourism, which brings architects, environmentalists and local authorities together, then we also have to ensure that a legal entity will monitor its headway," Mrs. Fakhouri asserted.

The fourth major problem, she cited, is the lack of a necessary infrastructure to deal with mass tourism.

That does not mean a lack of hotels, which are built in abundance at major sites, but scarcity of roads, public transportation and electricity.

Tourists, Ms. Fakhouri concluded, are looking for authentic arenas apart from major attractions and eco-tourism is an authentic approach in the provision of such sites.

WHAT'S GOING ON

PLAYS

* Two plays entitled "The City of Sawasnah" and "The Three Comrades" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Wednesday and Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

SEMINAR

* Seminar on "Political Parties' Status in the Political System, and their Role in Political Uprising" and "Standards of Political Parties Classification" by Dr. Mohammad Al Tarawneh and Dr. Ahmad Nofal at Al Wa'ed Party headquarters at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Products of the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation at the Movcenpick Hotel, Petra, until Jan. 10.
* Special show and sale

of Christmas crafts at the Jordan Crafts Centre (Alaydi), Jabal Amman, Second Circle (Tel. 644555), until Dec. 31.

* Christmas special at the Jordan River Designs showroom (hand-made ornaments and decoration), Jabal Amman, First Circle (Tel. 613081/2), until Dec. 31.

* Works by Spanish painter Clara Anado at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman until 15 Jan.

* Exhibition of colourful gifts and crafts designed by Andrea Attalla at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation, Wadi Saqra Street (Tel. 699141/2), until Jan. 10.

* Works by several artists entitled "The Artist and the Environment" by several artists at Alia Art Gallery, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 30.

* Water colour works by Jabbar Mijbil entitled

"Declared Hunches" at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina, until Dec. 25.

* Works by ten contemporary Indonesian artists entitled "From Scripts to Abstraction" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (open daily except Tuesdays), until Jan. 12.

* Painting exhibition by Hind Nasser at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre/Artisana, Jabal Amman (Tel. 647858), until Jan. 10. Also displaying a regular exhibition of arts and crafts and Christmas items.

* Display of Christmas gift items at the Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7), until Jan. 2.

* Works by Rula Al Shuqiri at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Wehdeh, until Jan. 4. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

Algerian security forces kill 7 armed fundamentalists

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Algerian security forces killed seven armed Islamic extremists and wounded many others in a sweep in the Aflou region, 400 kilometres south of Algiers, the press reported Tuesday.

The *Liberte* daily said that the security forces were engaged in their second major operation in recent weeks in the region, where fundamentalist gunmen have carried out several massacres of civilians.

According to press figures, at least 37 Islamic guerrillas waging a civil war against the secular, military-backed regime have been killed in the past week. But armed groups have pursued their campaign and have been blamed for a big car bomb blast in a crowded part of central Algiers Monday, which killed eight people and wounded 70 others, according to hospital sources.

The explosion came days after Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia repeated a government claim that the authorities were largely on top of

terrorism, and as the most radical of the extremist movements appeared to be seeking a comeback in the capital, which had been spared random bomb attacks for some months.

The Armed Islamic Group (GIA) has recently reimposed a reign of terror over the Kasbah, the old quarter of the city, where armed men kill people, either by sitting their throats or by machine-gunning them, sometimes in broad daylight.

Islamic extremists took up arms against Algeria's military-backed government in 1992, after the cancellation of the second round of elections which the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

The civil war — in which the security forces have been blamed for many of the brutal killings — has claimed more than 50,000 lives, according to Western estimates, and at least 80,000, according to the head of one of Algeria's Human Rights Leagues.

Meanwhile, GIA has

threatened fresh bomb attacks in France unless President Jacques Chirac intervenes to free one of its leaders sentenced to death in Algeria, a senior French official said Tuesday.

The threat was contained in a letter to Mr. Chirac purporting to come from the GIA, the official, who asked not to be named, said.

The GIA was blamed for bomb attacks which killed eight people in France last year and is suspected of a similar attack which killed four commuters on a Paris train earlier this month.

The official said the letter did not specifically mention the Dec. 3 bombing at the Port-Royal train station, but made a reference to an unspecified recent event and threatened to "continue" attacks.

He said the Interior Ministry may issue an official statement later in the day.

French radio said the GIA demanded that Mr. Chirac secure the release of GIA leader Abu-Adlan Abdelhaq Layada, held and sentenced to death in Algeria, and

other members of the group.

The GIA wrote to Mr. Chirac last year, at the height of the wave of bombings in France, demanding that France sever links with its former colony and that Mr. Chirac convert to Islam.

Last March the GIA kidnapped seven French monks in Algeria, demanding the release of Muslim rebels jailed in Algeria. The monks' throats were slit nearly two months later.

The group was also responsible for the Christmas 1994 hijacking of a French airliner in Algeria. The four hijackers killed three passengers and were shot dead by French police after the plane landed in Marseille, southern France.

The GIA has accused France of hacking Algeria's military authorities.

It has claimed responsibility for killing dozens of foreigners in Algeria and the country's deadliest bomb attack in January 1995 when a suicide bomber slammed a car into a police station, killing 42.

1 killed, 8 hurt as arms depot explodes in Kabul

KABUL (AFP) — A large Taliban arms depot exploded in Kabul Tuesday, killing one girl and injuring eight children from the same family, residents said.

"We had eight children wounded in our house. Three of them have been taken to hospital in critical condition," a resident of Khair Khana told AFP.

A 16-year-old girl was reported killed in another house. He said there was a big bang and then a rocket hit his uncle's house while the family were taking breakfast Tuesday morning.

"There was one big explosion in which a huge cloud went skywards, followed by some smaller bangs," the man said. The explosions, in a Taliban military base in the north-west Khair Khana suburbs, were reportedly an accident. Smoke rising in the air could be seen even in the eastern Kabul suburbs.

Following the main explosions there were a series of secondary explosions, many of which were rockets which ignited and shot in the air, accidentally crashing into neighbouring civilian houses.

No official figures regarding the total number of civilian casualties have so far been released.

This base was one of many in Kabul taken over by the Taliban when they captured Kabul Sept. 27 from the ousted government forces of Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

The ex-Kabul forces, led by Mr. Rabbani's top Commander Ahmad Shah Masood, are dug in with their ethnic Uzbek allies of General Abdul Rashid Dostum some 40 kilometres north of Kabul.

Meanwhile the Taliban Tuesday organised a sports parade at the so-called Olympic Stadium in eastern Kabul in order to celebrate their capture of the Afghan capital.

The event was also an official declaration of support for sport by the Taliban, who have gained attention by declar-

ing a number of prohibitions in the name of religion. Among other sports which are popular here, Afghanistan has had a strong tradition in the field of wrestling, and in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics the country was represented by a boxer.

Meanwhile, the Taliban Islamic militia pushed back an infantry attack by rival forces Tuesday on the front lines north of the Afghan capital, an official broadcast said.

The attack reportedly took place about 40 kilometres from the capital on the front lines at the villages of Kalakan and Istalif, but without any territorial gains, the Taliban's official Radio Shariat reported.

"They (Taliban) gave tooth-breaking blows to the enemy," the radio said identifying the enemy as the "Gilan Jam" militia.

Gilan Jam is a derogatory term used to describe the battle-field excesses of rape and plunder by occupying troops.

Gen. Dostum and Mr. Masood have been dug-in around Kalakan and Istalif for the past two weeks where fighting has been characterised by an exchange of artillery shelling.

Mr. Masood has recently denied any intention of recapturing Kabul, but has concentrated on harassing the Taliban in small-scale warfare using guerrilla tactics he perfected fighting the Russians.

During the former Soviet Union's 1979-89 military occupation of Afghanistan, Mr. Masood was renowned for his stubborn resistance against the Communists in his native Panjshir Valley.

Sporadic attacks against Taliban frontline positions by Masood and Dostum forces will not win the war, but may secure a seat at the bargaining table, observers said.

Peace talks brokered by the United Nations aimed at an Afghan ceasefire have met with agreement in principle but so far nothing more concrete.

Bulgarian socialists elect new party chief

SOFIA (R) — Bulgaria's ruling Socialists elected Georgi Parvanov as their new leader Tuesday but a party congress left the prime minister's post undecided.

Mr. Parvanov was seen as a compromise choice in a showdown between reformers and hardliners in the party, which is halfway through its parliamentary term.

Mr. Parvanov told Reuters it had not been decided yet whether Zhan Videnov, who resigned as both party leader and prime minister Saturday, would return as premier. "This has yet to be debated," he said.

Proposals to divide the two jobs, supported by the reformers and opposed by Mr. Videnov, were a major issue of debate at the marathon three-day congress.

Later Tuesday, the party was expected to elect its ruling body, the Executive Bureau.

The new premier may not be officially announced until after parliament holds an extraordinary session on Dec. 28 to vote on the resignation of Mr. Videnov's cabinet.

Mr. Videnov told reporters he did not rule out staying on as prime minister. "Such a solution is not excluded," he said.

Mr. Parvanov, a member of the party's Executive Bureau, said a new cabinet would be appointed by mid-January.

He said the new cabinet should include "strong figures" like Interior Minister Nikolai Dobrev, who led the attack on Mr. Videnov's record. On Sunday, Mr. Dobrev condemned the cabinet's failure to halt economic collapse and curb corruption.

Mr. Parvanov, 39, defeated reformist candidate Georgi Pirinski, the former foreign minister who resigned last month saying the government did not have the support it needed to carry out tough economic reforms.

"Parvanov is a compromise figure between conflicting factions...being a more moderate person," said congress delegate and political analyst Miroslav Popov.

Party daily *Douma* said Videnov had insisted he would resign only if Mr. Dobrev took both posts, while Mr. Dobrev wanted to be either premier or party leader with Mr. Pirinski in the other job.

The showdown between party reformers and hardliners will delay government activity at a time when the 1997 budget is not yet finalised and the Central Bank is preparing to set up a currency board fixed exchange rate regime.

Bosnian Serbs start warcrimes proceedings against Izetbegovic

BANJA LUKA, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AFP) — A Bosnian Serb court Tuesday started warcrimes hearings in absentia against Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, brushing aside international criticism of the move.

A preliminary 30 minute session was held in front of a court presided by Dragica Giusac and including three civilian jurors. About 20 local journalists were also present.

The court in Banja Luka, the biggest Serb-run town in Bosnia, is due to decide later Tuesday whether a full trial should proceed.

Mr. Izetbegovic is accused of attempting to create an Islamic state in Bosnia and as commander-in-chief of the Bosnian army, of ordering the "systematic killing and persecution of Serbs."

The top Bosnian Muslim leader is also held responsible for the creation during the war of detention camps for Serbs, notably at Cele-

hici and Tarcin in the south-east, and of shelling "Serb" villages and towns.

Mr. Izetbegovic's court-appointed lawyer, Simo Tomic, briefly contested the jurisdiction of the court to judge deeds which were not committed solely on its territory, and argued that Mr. Izetbegovic, as head of Bosnia's three-man presidency, was immune from prosecution.

However, prosecution lawyer Nebojsa Pantice insisted that the Bosnian Serb authorities did have the right to try Mr. Izetbegovic.

The top Western peace envoy in Bosnia, Carl Bildt, said last week that the Bosnian Serbs should halt the trial, saying that "war crimes cases were the responsibility of the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague."

Observers said ultra-nationalists in the Bosnian Serb entity were behind the move, seen as a riposte to the indictments of former

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and his army commander General Ratko Mladic, who are both facing genocide and war crimes charges brought by the Hague tribunal.

But some sources say that, with newly-created joint institutions, the Bosnian Serbs may decide that it is not in their interest to poison relations with the Muslim-Croat Federation — the other of Bosnia's two entities.

Bosnian Serb Prime Minister Gojko Kljickovic in mid-November sent a letter to the Hague, asking the tribunal to open a file on Mr. Izetbegovic.

Mr. Kljickovic invoked the "primacy" of the tribunal and said that if it filed charges against Mr. Izetbegovic, it would show its "objectivity" and prove that it was not "just a means to apply pressure from the great powers on the Serb people."

Burundi scorns rebel ceasefire

NAIROBI (R) — A spokesman for Burundi's military ruler Tuesday scorned as propaganda a Hutu rebel declaration of an 11-day Christmas ceasefire, saying there was no reason to respond to the move.

Jean-Luc Ndirizeye, spokesman for Pierre Buyoya who seized power in a coup by the Tutsi-dominated army last July, said the government was not at war so could not declare its own ceasefire.

"It's just propaganda. What we want them to do is to say they are going to stop killing people, period," said Mr. Ndirizeye, speaking from the Burundi capital Bujumbura.

"It is proof they are on the ground killing people, but we are at war with nobody," said Mr. Ndirizeye, adding the government could not be expected to declare its own ceasefire but would not reject the rebel offer.

The leader of the largest

Hutu rebel group in Burundi, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD), said the ceasefire would take effect from midnight (2200 GMT) Monday.

But CNDD leader Leonard Nyangoma also warned the army against attacking rebel positions or redeploying troops during the ceasefire, saying the rebels would hit back with full force.

Despite its public position to the contrary, the army has clearly been at war with Hutu rebels for the past three years.

More than 150,000 people — most of them civilians — have been killed in massacres and civil war between the army and rebels since the assassination of Burundi's first Hutu president in 1993.

The London-based human rights group Amnesty International said last week Burundi's security forces killed at least 1,000 un-

armed Hutu civilians in the past month, some while sheltering in churches.

Amnesty said up to 500 people were massacred in a church at Nyarurama on Dec. 3, 60 kilometres south-east of Bujumbura.

The government has denied the report. Burundi has been under sanctions imposed by neighbouring states since July 30 in an attempt to force Mr. Buyoya to hold peace talks with the rebels.

The rebels have their own list of conditions for talks. Travellers from Bujumbura in eastern Burundi said Sunday 250 civilians were killed with guns and bayonets in an army massacre while troops were attacking rebels in the region last month.

Officials in Bujumbura said Sunday that only 19 people had been killed in army operations in the area last month.

Bhutto fears for life of jailed husband

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistan's dismissed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto Tuesday said she feared her jailed husband might be killed by poisoning and the murder blamed on her, but the acting prime minister dismissed the charges as "a figment of her imagination."

"I apprehend a threat to my husband's life. I wish you to take serious note of this," Ms. Bhutto said in a letter to chief election commissioner Fakhre Alam.

The interim government "may attempt to kill my husband through poisoning and frame me for the same," Ms. Bhutto said, claiming that the fear was based on information received by her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, "her father-in-law."

But Acting Prime Minister Malik Meraj Khalid told reporters: "There is no danger either to Bhutto or her husband Asif Ali Zardari or

being poisoned by someone."

"It is just a figment of her imagination," declared the 70-year old prime minister who assumed power after President Farooq Ahmad Leghari dismissed Ms. Bhutto on Nov. 5.

Mr. Zardari, a former investment minister, was arrested soon after Ms. Bhutto was fired by Mr. Leghari. He was charged with the murder of the deposed premier's estranged brother Murtaza Bhutto, who was killed in a police shoot out in Karachi on Sept. 20. Mr. Zardari maintains his innocence.

Benazir Bhutto, who was sacked for alleged corruption and misuse, has challenged the dismissal at the Supreme Court which is to start hearing her petition next month.

The ousted premier, who accuses the president of trying to destroy her Pakistan

People's Party (PPP), also claimed her uncle, the chief minister of her home province Sindh, was protecting the murderers of one of her party's former MPs, Altaf Bhaiyoo, who was killed by unidentified gunmen Friday.

Ms. Bhutto alleged that Mr. Leghari had assigned the chief minister the "duty to negotiate with criminal elements to kill" others, including herself.

Her letter requested a judicial tribunal look into her complaints.

Mr. Zardari has been lodged at a police station in Karachi after a court Sunday allowed the police to keep him for four days for further investigation into the Karachi shooting in which Murtaza's seven comrades were also killed.

His lawyers earlier quoted him as saying that Mr. Zardari feared he might be "poisoned" as the food he

was getting was not checked at the police station.

Sindh Chief Minister Murtaza Bhutto in a statement Monday rejected her allegations, saying that "Benazir thrives on politics of death and dead bodies."

"The government has apprehensions that now that her husband has gained international notoriety for corruption and is no longer of any use to her, she may herself poison the food she sends him simply for the purpose of gaining another body and accusing the government," he said.

"It is also apparent that having been thrown out of power, for the second time on corruption and incompetence, she has become desperate, paranoid and hysterical," he added.

Nevertheless, he said he had ordered doctors to inspect every food item that was sent to Mr. Zardari.

China slams U.S. media for arrogance, ignorance

BEIJING (AFP) — China attacked the U.S. media Tuesday for sabotaging improving relations with Washington with biased and arrogant news reports.

An editorial that ran in the English-language *China Daily*, the *People's Daily* and the *Xinhua* News Agency slammed "some members of the U.S. mass media, who, with their intrinsic arrogance and prejudice, have time and again lodged groundless charges against China."

"Some people's prejudice is more baneful than their ignorance," it added.

The article focused on the New York Times, which

picked Beijing last month with an opinion piece comparing improved Sino-U.S. ties with the 1938 appeasement policies in Europe which led to the rise of Hitler and World War II.

"They not only attack China wantonly but they also irrationally criticise Americans who insist on improving Sino-U.S. relations," complained the article, signed off by Wen Ming, which translates as "civilised."

The New York Times bore the brunt of further anger for a series of opinion pieces discussing rising nationalism in China.

"Some New York Times

articles have tried to create misconceptions that anti-foreign sentiment is ubiquitous in China," the editorial said.

"However, foreigners who have visited China or met Chinese people do not have that feeling, and the attempt to depict the Chinese people's patriotism for xenophobic nationalism is only aimed at creating another obstacle in Sino-U.S. relations," it added.

Relations between China and the United States have improved in recent weeks, after more than a year in the doldrums, with their presidents agreeing to an exchange of visits next year,

and the restarting of other high-level visits.

But the Chinese media has not allowed the rapprochement to get in the way of its criticisms of the United States.

On Saturday Beijing warned Washington that its strategists were seriously undervaluing the importance of China in regional and world affairs.

It said the collapse of the Soviet Union had not diminished the importance of China to the United States and that Washington was misjudging China by assuming it wants to challenge the United States for its position as a world superpower.

Rwanda detains 900 Hutus from Tanzania

KIGALI (R) — Rwandan authorities have detained about 900 Hutu refugees returning from Tanzania on suspicion they took part in the 1994 genocide, a U.N. spokesman said Tuesday.

Rwanda's Justice Ministry, meanwhile, said the first trials of more than 80,000 suspects held in jails accused of genocide would open Friday in southeastern Rwanda and next Monday in the capital Kigali.

Paul Stromberg, spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said some 500 returnees were detained in Murambi commune and 400 in Kibungo prefecture in the southeast.

"Detained, rather than arrested, is the best word because these 900 include a lot of people in protective custody to guard against vigilante violence," Mr. Stromberg told Reuters in Kigali.

"Murambi was apparently one of the communes with the highest rate of killing during the genocide

so the figure of 500 there has to be contrasted with nearby communes where only small numbers or none have been detained on their return," he added.

"Our concerns are for due process and we hope the (legal) procedures laid out will continue to be respected."

Last month Rwanda detained 347 refugees who joined the mass return of more than 500,000 Hutus from Zaire. Many of the ringleaders of the 1994 genocide fled deeper into Zaire, however.

Gerald Gahima, director at the Justice Ministry, said the first suspects from among more than 80,000 held in Rwanda and accused of involvement in the genocide would face a tribunal Friday at Kibungo, about 100 kilometres southeast of Kigali.

"I believe there are two accused. It will be a slow start and things will pick up as we go along. We hope that by next month all 12 tribunals will be working ac-

ross Rwanda," he told Reuters.

"We are not planning on judging all 80,000. Our suspicion is that a majority may respond to our confession programme and receive some measure of leniency," Mr. Gahima added in Kigali.

Those found guilty of being ringleaders or killers of large numbers, or having used especially brutal methods in the three-month genocide of an estimated 800,000 members of the Tutsi minority and Hutu moderates, could face the death penalty.

A Hutu refugee lobby group, the rally for the return of refugees and democracy to Rwanda, dismissed Monday the trials as "a parody of justice" and said the returnees being detained were being falsely accused by people who wanted their property.

Evidence gathered in the past two years would be presented to panels of three judges in the genocide trials, expected to last several

days each. Then there is one chance of appeal.

The very worst offenders are out of the country, and some of those before the tribunals may not be high-ranking. But the bottom line is they must be seen to be punished, that you cannot get away with these kind of crimes for any reason," Mr. Gahima said.

Mr. Stromberg said nearly 40,000 refugees crossed to Rwanda from Tanzania Monday, taking the total to return home in December to 365,000 since the Tanzanian government ordered all 542,000 Rwandan refugees in the country to leave by the end of December.

He said previous estimates by UNHCR officials that all the refugees would return by Christmas were overly optimistic.

"We expect to see 10,000 to 30,000 each day for the rest of the week," said Mr. Stromberg, adding Tanzanian authorities had not said how many who refused to go home were arrested or what would happen to them.



Children crave the crass for Christmas

By Karen Iley
Reuters

LONDON — Parents of the world be warned — when your children delve into their stockings Christmas morning, brace yourselves for an explosion of vomit, urine and goo.

But it may not be the traditional seasonal over-indulgence taking its toll on your beloved offspring.

A Reuters straw poll of this year's "must-have" holiday gifts around the globe revealed that children's fascination with bodily functions is as strong as ever.

In Australia, the favourite is "goopy luie," a plastic head that costs about \$16.

"You put your finger up his nose and pull out long goopies," explained Catherine Michael, a spokeswoman for Sydney toy store World 4 Kids.

"If you pull out the wrong one his head explodes up and his brain oozes out to the other players."

Italy's "Ciciobello" doll range and "Baby Born," available from Finland to Britain and Belgium, show that children now crave the total parental experience — dirty nappies (diapers) and all.

The "Ciciobello" dolls pull faces, eat, weep and even vomit — all for 99,000 lire (\$65) each.

"Baby Born" cries, eats, and fills its nappy, just like the real thing.

A spokeswoman at Harrods, the up-market London Department Store, said "gag" would slide into a few British stockings this year. The slimy substance makes hurping and slurping noises when squashed and squeezed.

But parents should not despair. Top of best-sellers lists around the world are the less gory, more traditional gifts, the perennial favourites of Barbie and Action Man dolls and Lego building blocks.

Barbie reigns supreme

Barbie continues to reign supreme. A best-seller in Britain, Finland, Portugal, South Africa, Poland and the United States, the glamorous blonde has even penetrated the Moscow market.

Stores said 1996 was unusual in that there is not just one "must-have" toy, but several.

"This year there is no single huge hit. As in every year, Lego and Barbie are very popular, as is an autumn newcomer, Hunchback Of Notre Dame characters," said Dariusz Kuzniarski of Kidiland, Poland's biggest toy store, in Warsaw.

"The most popular toys are linked to the movies Toy Story, 101 Dalmatians and Independence Day," said Keith Morris,

a spokesman at Arkansas-based Wal-Mart Inc., the largest retailer in the United States.

Buzz Lightyear, the star of Toy Story, was snapped up around the world.

"Stocks have run out completely — all the toy story figures are proving popular," said a spokesman at top Belgian toy chain Christiaensen. Buzz retails in Belgium at 1.198 Belgian francs (\$37.33).

In Britain, demand was so strong that the Disney Store promised to supply an extra 20,000 of the 12 inch (30 cm) tall, talking interactive toys when they arrived on Dec. 28, but all were sold on pre-order.

"We're hopeful of having a surprise shipment in on Christmas Eve," said a Disney Store spokeswoman. "We're waiting for confirmation and it's looking certain that we will have some in selected stores."

In the U.S. and Canada, "Tickle-Me-Elmo" completely sold out. The fuzzy red character from the children's programme Sesame Street, which giggles when squeezed, will be available in Canada until mid-January.

And myriad black and white spotted gifts for both adults and children are likely to leap from under the Christmas tree following the success of the remake of 101 Dalmatians.

Possible gifts range

from baby booties to handbags to toothbrush holders.

Adults show more restraint

While presents for children are becoming wilder and wackier, economic conditions could mean that gifts for adults are a bit more staid.

"The dunes are being very down-to-earth and practical this year, buying classic Christmas gifts," said Ole Hinggaard of Magasin Du Nord, Copenhagen's biggest department store.

Home environmental control products were selling well in the United States, particularly water filters and air cleaners. A hot item was the craftsman robo grip plier, handy for household chores.

Costing between \$19.99 and \$29.99, Sears estimates it has sold 2.5 million so far this year — a rate of 50 robo grips per minute.

And no matter what the economic climate there is always room at the top of the U.S. market for some unique, and very expensive, presents for adults.

The Dallas-based department store Neiman-Marcus is selling 50 limited-edition Jaguar luxury cars for \$75,000 each. The same company offered a "fish condo" for "up-and-coming guppies" at \$5,000.

Zaire prime minister takes charge of crisis government

KINSHASA (AFP) — Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko Tuesday approved a government reshuffle on the advice of his Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo who is to stay at the helm, despite frenzied speculation he was to be sacked.

Marshall Mobutu, who has presided over Zaire's economic and political decline for more than three decades, returned to Kinshasa last Tuesday after four months in Switzerland and France for prostate cancer surgery and convalescence.

He promptly reorganised the military, naming a new chief of staff, and gave Zaire's political leaders a deadline of Monday to come up with a "crisis government" to manage the situation in the east where rebels have wrested control of a large swathe of territory.

Political parties and the press gave themselves over to all manner of speculation about who might be called to take office, and about the possible sacking of Mr.

Kengo, despite constitutional provisions which bar the head of state from sacking or appointing a prime minister.

Meanwhile, Monday's deadline sailed by with no sign of a government's being announced.

Instead, a statement published by state television sought to quash the speculation, making plain that the premier's post was not vacant.

It stipulated that the prime minister's functions can only be ended by resignation, death or a no-confidence vote by the republic's transition parliament.

The main changes to the new government include the departure of the deputy premier and foreign minister, Kikitiwa Tumansi, and the defence minister, Admiral Mavua Mudima, according to a presidential decree.

Former Interior Minister Gerard Kamanda Wa Kamanda was given the foreign affairs portfolio and a military lawyer, General

Bolongo Likuya, replaced Adm. Mavua at the Defence Ministry.

The government has to be approved by the transition parliament before it can be invested.

Any new government is due to organise a constitutional referendum to bring in a democratic third republic — after more than six years of bickering among politicians amid economic chaos affecting much of the sprawling country's population.

General and presidential elections are scheduled to be held before July 1997.

Meanwhile, Mr. Mobutu early Tuesday left Kinshasa for his village of Gbadolite, some 2,000 kilometres to the north to celebrate Christmas.

Zairean government troops have launched a counter-offensive against mainly Tutsi rebels who have seized key towns and a large swathe of eastern Zaire, rebel leader Laurent-

Desire Kabila said Monday. Government troops, who in many cases have received no pay for four years, put up little more than token resistance to initial rebel advances. Soldiers have plundered many of the areas they have passed in their retreat and some are reported to have sold their weapons to the rebels.

French Television 2 television service, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, quoted rebel leader Laurent Kabila as saying the zairian army attack began in Bunia, near the Ugandan border, Saturday.

"There are regular troop reinforcements in Bunia and attacks (taking place)," Mr. Kabila was quoted as saying. He said his troops were resisting.

He called on Kinshasa authorities to "halt the military venture and come to the negotiating table," and accused France of helping Mr. Mobutu in his plan to push back the rebels.

Landslide in Papua New Guinea kills 38

PORT MORESBY (R) —

Thirty-eight people were believed killed and eight seriously injured when a landslide engulfed a hillside village in Papua New Guinea (PNG), disaster officials said.

The "South Pacific" nation's Director of Disaster and Emergency Services Leith Anderson said the landslide had buried the village of Waiunda near Menyamy after heavy monsoon rains.

Mr. Anderson, who earlier put the death toll at 43, said 38 people were now thought to have died in the landslide Sunday morning. Seventeen of the dead had been recovered and reburied and 21 people were still missing under the rubble.

Eight people were in critical condition at hospital in the town of Lae, on the north coast of the PNG mainland.

"Relief work has been hampered by bad wind and rain," Mr. Anderson told Reuters. "We'll be moving in tomorrow morning. The main relief effort will commence in the morning of Christmas Day."

Landslides are common in the mountains around the small township of Menyamy which are so steep and fragmented that Australian explorers in the 1930s called the area "broken bottle country."

The area was visited earlier Tuesday by Provincial Affairs Minister Peter Butler.

Mr. Anderson earlier issued strong wind and heavy rain warnings for all parts of the country, warning people not to venture out into the open unnecessarily and to look out for falling trees.

The capital, Port Moresby, and other parts of Papua New Guinea have seen very heavy monsoon rains.

Mr. Anderson said the reasons for the Waiunda landslide were not yet known but the village was half-way up a mountain of around 3,000 metres and the effects of deforestation meant that gardens above the village might have slipped downhill.

China warns U.K. against meddling

BEIJING (R) — China warned Britain Tuesday against meddling in the World Court over its decision to disband Hong Kong's elected legislature when it takes back the territory in mid-1997.

"If Britain does this, this will damage Sino-British relations," Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang told a regular news briefing.

"If the British act wilfully, create troubles and do not cooperate with the Chinese side, then Sino-British relations will be damaged," Mr. Shen said when asked about Britain's threat.

Last week, British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind denounced China's plans to disband the democratically elected legislature and proposed letting the International Court of Justice in the Hague rule on the dispute.

After more than 150 years of British rule, the capitalist territory of 6.3 million people falls back under the Chinese flag at midnight on June 30, 1997, with promises from Beijing's Communist leadership that almost nothing will change.

Upon the handover of Hong Kong, a Beijing-appointed Provisional Legislature will take over from the elected Legislative Council, reversing democratic reforms introduced by Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten over the past four years.

Mr. Patten has lashed out at the creation of the post-colonial legislature, calling its appointment by the 400-member Beijing-backed Selection Committee last week "a bizarre farce" and a "stomach-churning" process.

He has said the Provisional Legislature would be a "rubber stamp" chamber that would simply echo Beijing.

Spokesman Shen said matters pertaining to Hong Kong would be China's internal affairs after July 1, 1997 and warned Britain against interference.

"This will interfere in China's internal affairs," Mr. Shen said of Britain's threat. "Playing the international card is useless."

"To cooperate with China is of benefit to Britain, otherwise it will not be beneficial," he said.

Hong Kong's first post-

colonial chief executive, 59-year-old shipping tycoon Tung Chee-Hwa, has defended China's controversial decision and lashed at Britain, saying the territory's colonial masters must "face the reality."

Mr. Tung has said it was irresponsible of Britain to threaten to take Beijing to the World Court over the interim chamber.

The controversial new body is dominated by pro-Beijing figures — including 33 incumbent lawmakers and many politicians who lost to pro-democracy forces in the 1995 Legislative Council election, the first time all seats were filled by vote, either direct or indirect.

The Democratic Party, the favourite in last year's election with 19 of the 60 council seats, boycotted moves to create the provisional body, branding it anti-democratic.

The Provisional Legislative Council, as it will be known, is to sit from July 1 until a new legislature can be constituted by elections, set for 1998.

NATO Supreme Commander to step down

CAMPLEJEUNE, N.C. (R) —

The White House said Monday that Gen. George Joulwan, NATO's supreme allied commander, Europe, announced that he plans to retire next spring after 36 years of active duty service.

President Bill Clinton praised Gen. Joulwan for his service to NATO and the United States, while paying a Christmas time visit to Camp Lejeune in eastern North Carolina.

Mr. Clinton did not mention any successor to Gen. Joulwan, a career soldier who reluctantly accepted the NATO post in October 1993, when General John

Shalikashvili left NATO to become chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Clinton.

"I want to give special thanks to today to our supreme allied commander in Europe, Gen. George Joulwan, for all the years of arduous service at home and untold years abroad, and especially for his leading role in bringing peace to Bosnia," Mr. Clinton said.

As NATO's top military officer, Gen. Joulwan oversaw the NATO air strikes in 1995 which helped bring Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table. Since the Dayton Peace Accords late last year, Gen. Joulwan has played a vital role in trying to ensure the fragile peace in Bosnia, overseeing the NATO-led Peace Implementation Force, IFOR, there.

"That task is likely to be the central concern of his successor. All NATO supreme commanders have been Americans since the post was created in 1950, a year after the Western alliance was created at the height of the cold war to counteract any threat from the then-Soviet Union."

A tenacious former West

Point football star known as "Coach" to his troops, Gen. Joulwan, 56, moved to NATO after serving as commander of U.S. Forces in Latin America, based in Panama.

In that job, he coordinated the military, drug, intelligence efforts which involved getting many nations' armed forces to cooperate on regional drug issues, a skill that stood him well in NATO.

But before Panama, he had long experience in Europe in posts ranging from platoon leader to senior army commands.

9 German patients die in psychiatric hospital fire

RICKLING, Germany (R) —

Nine German women psychiatric patients were killed when a fire, possibly started deliberately, swept through a dormitory in their hospital in this small town north of Hamburg, police said Monday.

The fire quickly engulfed the single-storey wooden building Sunday night killing the victims, aged between 55 and 85, in one of post-war Germany's worst fire disasters.

Fire Department investigator Gerd Luehje told a news conference that evidence pointed to arson because "the fire started simultaneously in two sections of the building."

"We do not understand how this fire spread so fast," he said. State Criminal Of-

fice investigators immediately launched a probe. Even though the 50-metre long building was wooden, it had a concrete fire wall in its middle that should have prevented a rapid spread of the fire, Mr. Luehje said.

Local authorities however did not link right-wing extremists to the disaster.

The fire was first thought to have claimed only two lives. But after police sent search dogs through the smouldering remains of the barrack-like structure seven more bodies were found.

"The corpses of the seven elderly women were found in the ruins on the day after the fire," said Peter Suter, a spokesman for a Protestant Church organisation that operated the hospital.

One of the victims used a

wheelchair. Authorities said they were unsure why the women, all of whom were psychiatric patients, were unable to get out of the one-story building. Six of the victims were found huddled together in a communal room.

"People with psychiatric illness react differently to dangers than you or I would," said Hans-Joachim Schwartz, the director of the hospital.

"They don't always recognise dangers or recognise them too late," Mr. Schwartz said.

Police said 23 patients, including eight in wheelchairs, were rescued Sunday night shortly after the fire broke out.

Most of the victims were from Hamburg or the north-

ern state of Schleswig-Holstein. Several had lived in the building, where they were free to come and go as they pleased, for 25 years.

Rickling is a small rural town about 40 kilometres north of Hamburg and a similar distance east of Luebeck, where 10 people were killed in a January fire at a foreigners' hostel.

State prosecutors said that fire was started by a Lebanese man who lived in the house. He is now on trial charged with aggravated arson and causing bodily harm.

A synagogue in Luebeck has been set on fire twice in the last three years by suspected right-wing extremists.



SERB PROTESTS CONTINUE: Opposition leader Vuk Darskovic gestures as he addresses the crowd during a protest against election rigging in the central Serbian town of Nis, some 240 kilometres south of Belgrade Monday. Thousands of demonstrators against Serbian President Milosevic ignored the onset of the harsh Balkan winter to march along the streets of Serbia demanding their victory at local elections be restored (Reuters photo)

Hopes wane for Kashmir hostages at second Christmas in captivity

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) — The families of four Western tourists kidnapped by Muslim rebels in Kashmir are set to spend their second Christmas without them amid growing fears that the hostages might have been killed.

Kashmir experts and officials say hopes for the return of American Donald Hutchings, Britons Paul Wells and Keith Mangan and German Dirk Hasert, are waning. A massive campaign seeking information about their fate has made no headway.

"No one is even sure whether the four are still alive or have died months back," Sihti Sidqi, a political analyst said. "But at Christmas everyone should appeal for their release."

The tourists were among six Westerners kidnapped by the Harkat-ul-Ansar rebel group between July 4 and 8 last year from the Kashmir hill resort of Pahalgam. The militants demanded the release of detained colleagues in exchange for the hostages' freedom.

Ghulam Hassan, a postal official at Pahalgam, some 100 kilometres south of this state summer capital, said there was no Christmas mail for the hostages, nor were there

any appeals for their release.

"No greeting cards have reached us this year for the four," he said.

"Even the special mail boxes meant for the information on the four hostages are yet to register any message so far," he added.

Kashmir police official Mohammad Amin Khan said he still had hope although the announcement of a state reward of one million rupees (\$28,500) for information about the hostages has yielded nothing since Dec. 13.

"I am eagerly waiting for that call that will take me to the hostages," he said. "Christmas is the best time to hear some good news..."

The Indian Express newspaper said in a report based on the alleged confessions of Nasir Mehmood, an arrested member of Harkat-ul-Ansar group, that all the hostages had been killed.

"The foreigners were killed on Dec. 13, 1995 in the Magam area of Kokernag district and buried in the jungles there. The exact location where they were buried was kept a secret," he said.

Mr. Mehmood, a 31-year-old Pakistani arrested this year, also said a fifth hostage, American John Childs,

was allowed to escape as he was ill and had a bad leg but Norwegian Hans-Christian Ostro was shot dead and headed in August 1995 after the chief captor received a supposed "message from Allah".

The kidnappers had "disobeyed instructions," Mr. Mehmood said, adding they had been told to abduct expatriate engineers in Kashmir and not tourists.

In November, the United States promised \$2 million for information about the hostages.

A Kashmir newspaper last month carried an unconfirmed report of the hostages' movements, saying they were alive and held in a remote area in the mountainous district of Doda.

Kashmiri militant groups fighting Indian rule in the country's only Muslim-majority state have denounced the kidnapping — the longest such drama in the Himalayan state. India has repeatedly called for their release.

More than 15,000 people have died in the Kashmiri separatist drive since 1989.

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Weekender

Jordan Times, Thursday, December 26, 1996 **A**

Santa hears what they really, really want

By Sara Henley
Reuter

ARCTIC CIRCLE, Finland — Matthew Weeks from London is a streetwise nine-year-old. His verdict: "He was real."

Six-and-a-half-year-old Antoine from Paris found the red-robed man "bien" (good), but a bit scary. Two-year-old Louise just stared. Newly-weds Etsuko and Yoshiaki Hamada from Tokyo were still looking forward to seeing "Oji."

Santa Oji-San, Pere Noel, Svary Mikalas, Stinterklaas, Sheng, Dan Lao Ren to the Chinese, or Joulupukki to the Finns — it's that Santa time of year up on the 66th parallel, when the frosty air rings with the chatter of excited foreign voices.

The Lapland town of Rovaniemi has many rivals to its claim to be the home of the "real" Father Christmas, but attracts some 400,000 visitors a year who seem able to handle temperatures of around minus 16 Celsius (minus nine Fahrenheit). "It's been absolutely brilliant for the older kids as well," like us, said Matthew's father Michael, of their five-day package tour. "I've never seen so much snow."

'Santa helps'

Concorde comes twice a year from Britain and about 100 charter flights land at

Rovaniemi Airport annually, with as many as 13 flights due on peak days like Dec. 23 when Santa makes his official departure to get those presents delivered.

Parents Mike and Tracy Davies from Wakefield in England found the cold bearable and the trip "exhausting and wonderful."

Seeing "the real Santa" is just part of the packed programme of husky dog treks, reindeer-driving lessons, ice-hogging and snowmobile safaris that mainly British tour operators offer.

But as Marja Selin, information officer at the Santa Claus Village, put it: "Santa helps."

The man himself

"He has a very solemn side," said Antoine's father, looking up at the genial, flaxen-bearded gent — sporting beneath his scarlet robes somewhat unconventional striped socks — as he greeted a fidgety group of Finnish adolescents.

Indeed, Santa takes his role very seriously, especially for younger children. "Why should you break a druin in this world?" he said. "The children of today have enough broken dreams."

Rather than a barrel of gifts, this Santa has by his side some stickers and an atlas of the world. "Kalimeera" appears to be about the extent of his Greek but he

manages well in French and even recognises — and welcomes — last year's visitors.

The Spice Girls

Santa's first-time visitors this year included the international pop sensation, the Spice Girls (who in line with their hit presumably told him what they "really, really want").

Sources close to Santa also reveal that even a senior Chinese politician had earnestly requested an audience.

Commerce — for those who can pay — plays a big role. The economy in northern Finland is far from booming. As many as one-fifth of the workforce are unemployed in some areas. But less affluent visitors come on charity trips, which are partly subsidised by the people of Rovaniemi.

Santa has expanded...

There was a bit of a scandal this time last year when some of Santa's young visitors were forced by a lack of space in his office to stand outside in plunging temperatures waiting to see him. So now he has moved into a big new building.

"I like my new house, it's very good," he said, pointing to the balcony from which the timid can watch at a safe distance.

"Now it's not so crowded,

I can still have a quiet chat with the very young children. And I'm able to have some of my books with me — like my guide to the world's chimneys." He gestured at the man-sized mock volumes on the wall.

Santa observed with interest how different nationalities react to waiting to see him. "The British...queue. Some nationalities seem to think if you push, it goes faster."

...And so has his postbag

Santa's Lapland address — distance from New York 6,204 kilometres, from Rio 11,594 kilometres, from London 2,260 kilometres — is also his "main" post office. Finland has handled 700,000 letters to Santa so far this year, compared with some 150,000 sent to other countries.

But while the letters multiply, their subject matter varies little. They are mainly lists — like the 38 items including "chicken limbo, remote car, power ranger stuff, telescope, little batman cars, lights x 3..." for Warren Lester, six.

Leeanna (no address) wants a Spice Girls compact disc.

But not all the post is materialistic. Irene, eight, asks, "what do you want to be?" From Singapore comes a long letter from Tan Lihan "a fun-loving and easy-going gal."

"By the way," she writes. "Bethlehem is the birthplace of Jesus and Christmas originated from there. Why is Santa Claus, which is so much related to Christmas, originally from Finland instead of Bethlehem?" She will get a reply.

Dear Mrs. Claus...

Less direct may be the response to the wishes of 17-year old Nany from Thailand for health for her cats To-To, Paew, Pank, Nu-Dee, Pong, Tong, Jear-Law, Vam, Jew, Tung, Meaw-Lek, Naja, Yellow and Dam.

Izumi Asano, 20, from Japan, asks if Santa has ever seen a UFO (unidentified flying object). Yoshiko Takada, 20, urges, "please listen I'm falling in love now... But be thinks of me just a friend... Please give me a miracle."

A young feminist, Annalisa Luella Cravens, writes to "Mrs. Claus. I think your husband is real. Is he?"

Israeli Ruth, 22, writes although she is Jewish: "Snow is not exactly the most common thing here." Class 1C from Sofia say: "You are the biggest magic because you make us be kind."

Perhaps Yoshiko deserves the last word. "Love is difficult," she tells Santa. "I am not a child, but my heart is a child."



Santa Claus presents his huge library of 'all world knowledge' at his office at Arctic Circle, Finnish Lapland. The Arctic Circle town of Rovaniemi has many rivals to its claim to be the 'real' Father Christmas, but attracts some 400,000 visitors each year and has received more than 700,000 letters this year compared with some 150,000 sent to other countries (Reuter photo)

Sun, sand and fake snow — Miami's kind of Xmas

By Patricia Zengerle
Reuter

MIAMI — Bell-ringing Santas clad in fur-trimmed suits sweat it out on sandy street corners, the snow comes from a can and palms double up as Christmas trees. It's the festive season Miami-style.

Despite the best efforts to keep the season's traditions, Christmas in the tropics has a rhythm of its own that is far removed from the snowy "white Christmas" legendary American crooner Bing Crosby dreamed about.

That white stuff that looks like snow piled up on a holiday display usually comes from a can, or from a beach — sand is a favourite base for church nativity scenes.

The Santa collecting for charity probably is not wearing shorts — although many of his shopper-donors are — but on a steamy Miami day he is sweating in that red suit.

And the lights on the tree beside him are a thin spiral

twined up the stem and into the fronds of a palm tree.

Christmas "trees" — trucked south from North Carolina — are for sale, but are kept under tents to keep them from drying in the bright sun.

"It's kind of a confusion of seasons here," said William Heim, an English professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa, who studies holiday folklore and customs.

Most of the traditions associated with Christmas in the United States and Europe are tied to cold weather, such as the decoration of pine trees, which remain green all winter, as a symbol of hope and a sign that spring will come again.

Mistletoe and holly also are evergreens, he noted. But warm weather dwellers dreaming in vain of a white Christmas should not feel too blue, most of the Christmas traditions tied to the cold have little to do with the religious basis of the holiday.

"Christmas has been extremely romanticised in popular culture and that includes snow. But in reality it has absolutely nothing to do with snow. And I do not believe it was snowing in Bethlehem," said Sharon Sherman, a folklorist at the University of Oregon who has studied Christmas traditions and their roots.

Christmas trees, mistletoe and even Santa Claus had their origins in rituals established thousands of years before Christ's birth. "Santa Claus, too, is probably older than Christmas," Ms. Heim said.

"The idea of the end of the year and the old man with the beard, which seems to symbolise the end of the growing cycle of the year, again in all probability is some kind of ancient symbol for that particular season (that)... Ultimately, over centuries, evolved into St. Nicholas, or Santa Claus."

"Again, what does a jolly old man in a beard in a red suit, going ho ho ho, have to do with the birth of Jesus?"

But try telling that to northerners like Ann Marie Safary, a New Yorker shopping at an open air mall next to Biscayne Bay this week who was heading back home before Dec. 25.

"There's nothing like New York at Christmas," she said, adding that she had spent several Christmases with relatives in Miami, but things had just not been the same.

"I don't necessarily miss the cold weather. But when I go through the malls here and I see the fake snow, I laugh," she said.

Even high school student Chris Cave, who has spent his life in Fort Lauderdale and loves the sun and sand, would like to try some of the things he has read about.

"The only thing that I do miss is snow and going out and cutting down your own Christmas tree. That would be cool," he said.

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Christmas dreams dashed as Santa letters go unopened

By Abigail Schmelz
Reuter

STOCKHOLM — Santa's little helpers have downed tools at North Pole Post Offices in Greenland and Iceland, leaving piles of children's Christmas letters unanswered and thousands of dreams unfulfilled.

Carefully penned letters full of Christmas requests which are sent to Santa every year by children from all over the world have fallen victim to government spending cuts.

"Kids can send a letter to Santa but they won't get an answer," Siri Kveller, of the Santa Claus of Greenland Foundation, told Reuters.

"The more letters we answered, the more we got and we simply can't afford it," Mr. Kveller said.

Two years ago, funding dried up from official Greenland funds that paid

workers to reply to the piles of mail and the service stopped.

Now the letters are dumped in a big red mailbox and then bundled into storage — mostly unopened.

Children who address their letters to "Santa Claus, North Pole, Iceland" probably won't have much luck either.

The state-sponsored Icelandic Board of Tourism, which once answered the letters, was forced by budget cuts to stop the project about 15 years ago.

The letters now are left in a room and charity groups are invited to deal with them as they see fit.

Axel Sigurdsson of the Icelandic Post Office told Reuters: "The letters are just thrown away after a while if they have no return address."

One organisation, North

Pole in Iceland, has taken over some of Santa's job, selling cards and diplomas that parents can order and have sent to the child of their choice.

The group is campaigning to keep Santa's rightful home in Iceland — arguing against those who claim the white-bearded children's hero as their own.

Sweden, Greenland, Finland, Canada and Iceland all claim to be Santa's real home.

"Obviously there is a little competition in the field between the Scandinavian countries," said North Pole in Iceland's Hermann Audunsson.

"This is probably the only country in the world where Santa Claus is a registered trademark."

Youngsters who wrote to Finland's Santa have a better chance of hearing whether their dreams will come

true on Dec. 24 or 25 when Rudolph and his team fly by.

But even in Finland it is the luck of the draw.

"This year children wrote 600,000 letters so it's impossible to answer all of them but we try our best," said Pia Kamppainen of the post office's Santa Project.

The chosen ones can get the basic reply — a letter composed in 12 languages — through a project sponsored by the Finnish government.

The Swedish Post Office receives up to 80,000 letters a year and says all are answered with a small gift.

"We get letters from children all over the world," said Lena Depomian of the Swedish Post Office.

"They know they have Santa Claus here in Sweden. If we stopped I think all the kids would cry," she said.

Waiting for Mel Gibson to cough

By Ellen Wunhorst
Reuter

NEW YORK — All Mario Magnani wants is for Mel Gibson to cough in public.

One of New York's video-paparazzi, Magnani knows of an Australian television show that wants to buy film of Gibson showing the effects of years of heavy smoking. So, braced against the early winter chill, Magnani waited on a corner for the star to appear.

Gibson is just one of many celebrities Magnani will chase, videocamera in hand, during his day. While there are sexier scoops and more elusive exclusives, this is the kind of footage Magnani can sell for hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Besides, one cough from Gibson and Magnani can take a break from his stakeouts, which may begin at daybreak and last well into the night. The much-maligned job of video-paparazzi has been made more difficult of late, he complained — the victim of a boycott led by NBC's "ER" star George Clooney.

Clooney launched his campaign after Paramount television's "hard copy"

broke a deal and ran footage of his girlfriend. He refused to appear in other Paramount programmes, namely "entertainment tonight," until he exacted a pledge that the company would set rules about the film it buys.

The boycott has gathered strength as other big names have signed on, denouncing the intrusion into their private lives and citing horrific examples of "stalkerazzi" trailing their children or antagonizing them into flailing their fists or filing lawsuits.

The recent boom in video-paparazzi, video rats as they are sometimes known, has only made it worse. Their footage can capture entire sequences, not just the moments made famous by still photographers such as Ron Gallela, who stalked Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, or those who captured the "toe-sucking pictures" that shamed Britain's Duchess of York.

Magnani, son of a still paparazzo, says the video boycott is unjustified. "Being a celebrity is being famous. Being famous is being photographed," he said as he waited for Gibson, the star of "conspiracy

theory" being shot on the streets of New York. "It's all part of making all that money."

For Magnani, the boycott also means money — less of it.

Sales have fallen by half as shows like "hard copy" and "inside edition" shy away from freelancers' film, he said. He now sells three or four pieces a week, down from five or six.

And it makes a hard job harder. Video-paparazzi must research where and which celebrities might turn up, fend off security staff and then spend gruelling hours waiting and watching. With just seconds to catch a passing star, averting their eyes even for a minute can mean a day's lost work.

As if to prove his point, Magnani's conversation was interrupted as Gibson appeared, cellphone to his ear, only to disappear just as quickly into a makeup trailer.

Gibson didn't cough.

While many of his colleagues deserve their aggressive reputation, Magnani, 33, has developed a less confrontational style. Tall and handsome as many of the stars he shoots, he ducks

behind buildings and fades into crowds. His hand-held video-camera slips easily into the folds of his thick jacket.

"I prefer to work with distance. I can get kisses," he said. "If they're on the alert, I can't get a scoop."

As Magnani chanced, Gibson emerged from the trailer and strode quickly past. The actor was smoking furiously, but he still didn't cough. Nor would he for the rest of the afternoon as he acted in a movie scene and Magnani watched from across the street.

But a couple of days later, Magnani's luck improved.

This time the target was John Kennedy's publicity-shy new wife, Carolyn Bessette. The world's appetite was whetted by the couple's September wedding and the famous videotape of the two arguing last winter reportedly fetched the equivalent of many people's yearly salary.

On this very early morning, Magnani waited down the block as the statuesque — and easily spotted — Bessette emerged from the couple's tribeca loft. Her head down, clad in a black coat and dark glasses, she

walked quickly to a nearby subway.

She should be less resistant to the glare of publicity, Magnani advised, as he followed her down the station steps.

"Just pose, and keep posing until they don't want you," he said. "The more you run, the more they'll follow."

He hid behind the subway token booth, waited for Bessette to board an arriving train and leaped into an adjoining car.

As she sat reading a newspaper, he filmed her through a smudged window until she got off the train many stops later.

Magnani was happy, knowing that a round of telephone calls to tabloid TV shows would round up the highest bidder for his film. But with tabloids speculating that Bessette is pregnant, he knows what the best scoop would be.

"I'm hoping to catch her at the gynecologist. I'm working on it," he said with a smile, setting off on his next pursuit.

Mel Gibson was still in town, and maybe he was coughing.



Mario Magnani, a video-paparazzi photographer in New York City, works the streets in search of celebrities. Mr. Magnani has found his job harder after several celebrities have boycotted shows that use video-paparazzi material (Reuter photo)

Some things beat experience

By Jean-Claude Elias

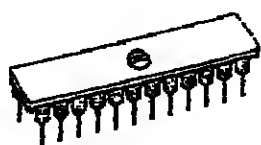
PROFESSIONAL experience is usually considered as an important asset. People who work for a certain number of years in a given field end up with an amount of knowledge that no academic background can provide or replace. All those who graduate from college know how unpleasant it can be to enter the professional life with a feeling that one knows so little and that everything is still to be learnt.

Beginner engineers in the field of, say civil engineering, will look up to more experienced colleagues with respect, or at least with the hope to learn from them as much as they can, in the shortest possible time. And of course, the more experienced one gets, the more venerable he or she becomes.

This social-professional classification doesn't exactly apply to the world of computers and data processing. The nature and the speed of the changes are creating a new breed of young experts — whiz kids — who show no particular respect for their elders and who often can show them a few tricks of their own.

The technological gap between a 24-year-old computer graduate and his 50-year old senior is tremendous. Not only information technology (IT) took giant steps between both generations but a certain part of the knowledge the older one has acquired simply isn't valid anymore. Naturally the main principles and theories remain the same — informatics after all is a science chiefly built on mathematics. Therefore a 50-60-year computer specialist cannot be relegated with the dinosaurs. From the practical point of view however radical changes did occur. The amount of new information about IT is much better absorbed, assimilated and then used, implemented by young, fresh minds.

chip talk



In the United States, the average age of those who design and programme those sophisticated CD-ROM games is 23. There are numerous examples of people who are now considered as genius innovators in the computer industry and who dropped out from college for being too eager to start implementing their ideas.

If experience is something still valuable, a computer professional who has more than 30 years of experience for example but hasn't made the continuous, painful effort of constantly updating his knowledge may find himself seriously diminished in the practical world of personal computing, if compared to a younger colleague.

I remember that during a technical show I was participating in as an exhibitor, back in 1988 in Amman, among all the visitors who asked us hundreds of questions of all sorts, the most opportune, the most interesting ones came from a young man who must have been 16 or 17 years old then. One thing old-timers in the profession have learnt is never to underestimate the capability of the young — however young they can be. Such a positive attitude towards the emerging generation can only come with experience.

Time left over to dream

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen

NOT BEING able to learn by trial and error was something I had mentioned last weekend and I mention it again this weekend because it just seems that our inability to learn from past mistakes is just simply incredible.

This means that even though some things are taken to be common knowledge, they are worth restating if only to emphasise the increasing precariousness of our tenure on the planet.

For example, those amongst us who normally tune into the second channel of Jordan Television would have seen over the past couple of weekends a special two-part report on the perils facing our precious Wadi Rum if we are not more careful with how we conduct business over there.

Now, out of genuine concern, I did write about Rum and the situation there in May of this year. But sadly, our habit of ignoring and looking past statements expressing concern whenever they are brought to our attention did get in the way of our good sense of judgement at the time. That is to say that no action was initiated.

We now look back in bitterness and dismay because we are only now beginning to feel the scale of the damage that has been inflicted upon Rum over the past year. There are plenty of people, tour guides and operators et al, getting richer and richer by taking advantage of Rum, its beauty and its people.

All of this happens because of the absence of a governing body looking out for the interests of the Wadi. What we are not told, but can easily work out, is that this is happening because there is a lot of vested interest fighting for the rights to develop Rum.

As a result of this greed and lack of a clear vision and an overall development policy, Rum is being left to suffer the increasing abuse that we are now witnessing.

This is only one of many things that we have allowed to slide into disarray over the past year. What we need to do in the days ahead is to look for ways in which we can truly serve our habitat and environment while maintaining our development goals. We need to always pay more attention to the bigger picture and even fight for a better world, if



that is deemed necessary. We would only be fighting for our future. Fighting for the right to have one and fighting for the right to dream and to want more and better things.

This is one really important thought as this year draws to an end. Another has to do with remembering those things that have been close to our hearts over the past 12 months. Things that we now leave behind without any explanations, other than those that have to do with the passage of time, being given. Things that we will come to remember only as fleeting illusions from which we had learnt a great deal.

The logical thing now is to find new things to believe in. Things like finding balance in our lives. A balance between that which we need and that which we want. The balance between despair and hope. Between the need to speak out and the need to remain silent.

If we want to succeed, we need only to believe in the things that are real. We need to believe in the things which are pure. We have to believe in the need to listen to one another. We need to believe in those things that some of us have and those same things that others have to fight for. Most of all, we need to believe that even though change is inevitable, we have the choice to make it either a change for the better or one for the worse. We need to believe that we can make a difference.

I leave you with these thoughts in the hope that we will meet again in 1997, Merry Christmas everyone, and a Happy New Year.

JTV CHANNEL TWO WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, December 26, 1996

2:00	Holy Koran
2:05	Iris + Ovide & The Gang
2:35	Out Of This World
3:00	Covington Cross
3:30	Feature — They Call Me Bruce
	Starring: Ralph Mauro & Pam Huntington
5:00	News Flash
5:02	Continuation Of Film
5:30	French Programmes
	Entertainment Varieties
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine — Atomes Crochus
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Pacific Station
8:00	The American Chart Show
8:30	Material World
9:10	Kung Fu — The Legend Continues
10:00	News In English
10:25	Feature Film — Callie and Son
	Starring: Lindsay Wagner & Jameson Parker

9:10	Documentary — Hold Up The Sun
10:00	News In English
10:25	New Drama Series — Operation Corbra
11:15	Miami Vice (Police Drama)
12:00	Yes Minister

Monday, December 30, 1996

2:00	Holy Koran
2:05	The Muppet Show & Flintstones
3:00	French Programmes
3:15	L'Ecole Des Fans
4:00	Crystal Maze
5:00	News Flash
5:02	French Programme
	Magazine — Envoye Special
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine — Allo La Terre
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Down To Earth
8:00	Documentary — Discover Magazine
8:30	Virtual Reality — VR.5
9:10	Hunter
10:00	News In English
10:25	Feature Film — Bom on the fourth of July
12:00	Family Maners

2:00	Holy Koran
2:05	Muppet Show
2:30	Dad's Army
3:00	French Programme — Varieties
3:30	Nature's Inventions
4:30	Hey Dad
5:00	News Flash
5:02	Wild Flower — Documentary
5:15	Dalton (New Drama)
6:00	French Programme — Magazine
	Science — Cinq Sur Cinq
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Rosanne
8:00	Disaster Chronicle — Documentary
8:30	Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
9:10	The Lazarus Man
10:00	News In English
10:25	Best Seller — Devices & Desires
11:15	The Knock

Friday, December 27, 1996

2:00	Holy Koran
2:05	The Muppet Show & Flintstones
3:00	French Programmes
3:15	L'Ecole Des Fans
4:00	Crystal Maze
5:00	News Flash
5:02	French Programme
	Magazine — Envoye Special
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine — Allo La Terre
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Down To Earth
8:00	Documentary — Discover Magazine
8:30	Virtual Reality — VR.5
9:10	Hunter
10:00	News In English
10:25	Feature Film — Bom on the fourth of July
12:00	Family Maners

Tuesday, December 31, 1996

Saturday, December 28, 1996

2:00	Holy Koran
2:05	Adventures Of Micky And Donald
2:30	Cinque And Safety At Work
3:00	French Programme
	Document — La France Aux Mille Villages
3:30	Family Programme — Fete Des Bebes
4:00	Gillette (Sports)
4:30	Criss Cross
5:00	News Flash
5:02	The Blue Heelers
6:00	French Programme
	Serie — Jack
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine — Ziva
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Something Wilder
8:00	Superstars Of Action
8:30	Prism
9:10	Superman
10:00	News In English
10:25	Best Seller — Devices & Desires
11:15	Feature Film — Lili
	Starring: Leslie Caron & Jean Paul Aumont

2:00	Holy Koran
2:05	Budgie (The Little Helicopter)
2:20	Captain Planet (Cartoon)
2:40	I Love Lucy
3:00	French Programme — Sciences Cartoon
3:15	Magazine — Montagne
4:00	At The Zoo
4:30	Dog House
5:00	News Flash
5:02	Fun With Physics
5:15	Cyclone Tracy
6:00	French Programme
	Serie — La Lumiere Des Justes
6:15	Magazine — Extra Large
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Murphy Brown
8:00	Magazine Zero — One
8:30	The Accidental Tourist
10:00	News In English
10:25	Bert Rigby — You're a fool
	Starring: Robert Lindsay & Robbie Coltrane
12:00	The 1996 World Music Awards

Wednesday, January 1, 1997

Sunday, December 29, 1996

2:00	Holy Koran
2:05	Jonny Quest
2:30	You Bet Your Life
3:00	French Programme
3:30	Entertainment — Week-ends Specialux
4:00	World Echo (Documentary)
4:30	The Famous Five
5:00	News Flash
5:02	Our World Their World — Documentary
5:15	All Our Children
6:00	French Programme
	Magazine — Faut Pas Rever
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine — Sports Et Musique
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air
8:00	Auto — Classics
8:30	Album Show

2:00	Holy Koran
2:05	The Muppet Show
2:30	Circus
3:00	French Programme
4:00	Documentary — Earth Revealed
4:30	Blizzard Island
5:00	News Flash
5:02	Kelly & Challenge
6:00	French Programme
	Document — Ushuaia
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine — Sports Et Musique
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Baker's Field P.D.
8:00	Challenges
9:10	N.B.A. Basketball
10:00	News In English
10:25	Cobra
11:15	Hart To Hart
12:00	Who's The Boss?

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

By Mohammad A. Shuqair

HOWLERS

THEATRE: A method of obtaining money by false pretences.

THIEF: One who just has a habit of finding things before people lose them.

TRANSLATOR: One who does not know what a foreign author means, but is willing to explain.

TROUSERS: An uncommon noun because it is singular on top and plural at the bottom.

WHY.....?: The word that invented science.

WORLD WAR I: A historical incident that started with an assassination and ended with communism, fascism, inflation and depression.

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

** I can't stand this any more.
La astati' an atahammal akthar min thalek.

** You can do what you like.
Tastati' an taf'al ma tashaa'.

** I can meet you tonight.
Astati' an altagi ma'ka al-lailah.

** He is the sort of man to confide in.
Ennahu rajol yuthaq behi.

** It is for you to decide.
Al-amr matrouk laka lekay tat'takhith qararan.

** I came here to speak to you.
Je'to hona le'atakilam ma'ak.

** Nothing will make me change my mind.
Lan oghayer ra'yee le'ayy sabah minal Asbab.

** Calm down! You mustn't give way like this.
Eh'da'! Yajib alla tanhar hakthatha.

** I wonder how to convince you.
Tora, kayfa oqni'ok.

LAUGH-IT-OFF

* Teacher: "What's the difference between calamity and disaster?"
Student: "That your wife's drowning is a calamity and that anybody showing any help to save her a disaster."

* ONE of Qaraqush's sons ordered that a man must be hanged without doing him any justice.
The man was then brought before the prince who decided the man would be hanged at once. But one of the bodyguards told him:
"My lord, how would you hang him? He is your smith and without him you can't shod your horse as he is the only one in this town."
Looking out of his window, the prince caught sight of a porter and said: "Fetch that man and hang him instead!"

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. Bahrain's islands count eleven. Is this true or false?
2. Name the insect that carries "typhus."
3. What does the word "philadelphia" mean in Latin?
4. What was the Islamic country that gave woman the

right to elect for the first time?

5. Where was the egg-plant (aubergine) first grown?

6. Who was the author of The Good Earth?

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

FOR many generations, certain flowers have been accepted as having definite meanings. Thus, a gift of any of the examples listed below, may be taken to infer whatever description is appended.

Camellia — Beauty, loveliness.
Candytuft — Indifference, lack of affection.
Carnation (Red) — Alas for my poor heart!
Carnation (White) — Disregard, disdain.
Clover (Four-leaved) — Be mine.
Columbine — Foolishness.
Daisy — Innocence, purity.
Deadly Nightshade — Falsehood, untrue.

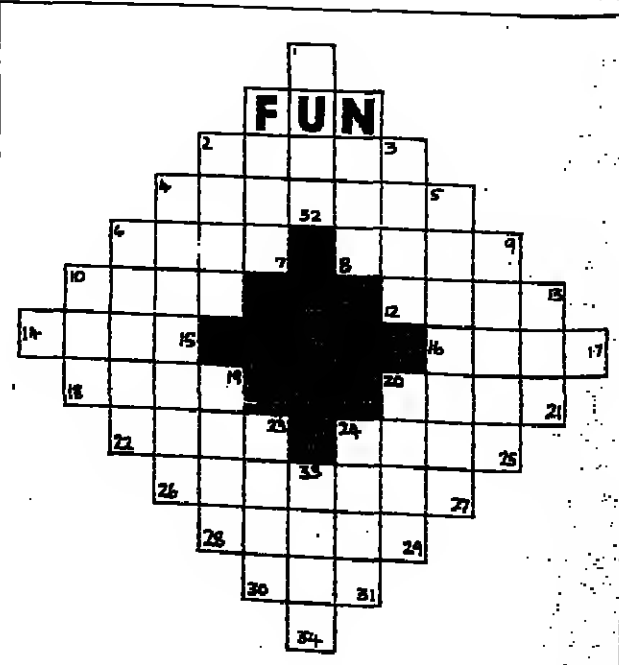
PUZZLES

THE WORLD'S FIRST CROSSWORD

THE WORLD'S first crossword was the brainchild of Arthur Wynne, who in 1903 had emigrated from his native Liverpool to the United States. Wynne became editor of the "Fun" of The New York World and one day in 1913 casting round for a new idea for the puzzle section he came up with the notion of a "word cross." This, the world's first crossword, was an immediate success, and the "word cross" or "cross-word" as it was later styled became a regular feature.

NEW YORK WORLD, DEC. 21, 1913

2-3 What bargain hunters enjoy	10-18 The fibre of the gomuti palm.
4-5 A written acknowledgement	6-22 What we all should be
6-7 Such and nothing more	4-26 A day dream
10-11 A bird	2-11 A talon
14-15 Opposed to less	19-28 A pigeon
18-19 What this puzzle is	F-7 Part of your head
22-23 An animal of prey	23-30 A river in Russia
26-27 The close of a day	1-32 To go on
28-29 To elude	33-34 An aromatic plant
30-31 The plural of is	N-8 A fist
8-9 To cultivate	24-31 To agree with
12-13 A bar of wood or iron	4-12 Part of a ship
16-17 What artists learn to do	20-29 One
20-21 Fastened	5-27 Exchanging
24-25 Found on the seashore	9-25 To sink in mud
13-21 A boy	



The bold and the beautiful of 1996 Christmas CDs

By Jim Patterson
The Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tennessee — You want "white Christmas" with a twang?

Take your choice. There's Tammy Wynette's version on Rhino Records' Country Christmas, Michelle Wright on Arista's Star Of Wonder, the group Shenandoah on their Christmas Album, and Collin Raye on his. And that's just the 1996 batch.

Nashville Record labels lick their chops and issue Christmas music with abandon each season. This year there are at least 10 offerings, ranging from Raye doing standards such as The First Noel and Silent Night with orchestra to Jimmy Buffett's island versions of Run Rudolph Run and Happy Xmas (War Is Over).

The math is simple. There's a ready-built market for Christmas music, so every performer with a following puts one out sooner or later.

"A pet peeve I have is that whenever somebody's hot ... They do a Christmas album," said Raye, whose tenor voice works well on Collin Raye Christmas: The Gift.

"I understand that, but usually the album turns out to have about the same amount of depth as that reason for doing one, which is none at all," he said.

Indeed, many of these collections are toss-offs. Buffett's Christmas Island has a couple of interesting originals for those who like a bit of the Caribbean in their Christmas, but his takes on Christmas rockers popularized by John Lennon and Yoko Ono and Keith Richards are pale copies of the originals. It's hard to believe Buffett settled for his erratic lead vocal on Happy

Christmas (War Is Over). Then there's the similarly titled Country Christmas and Christmas Country, the first from Rhino and latter from Warner Bros. Both take already released recordings from various sources to create a "new" Christmas collection to sell this year.

The nod here goes to the Rhino set, which leans to older artists like Jim Reeves and Loretta Lynn. Not many people have heard George Jones and Tammy Wynette's Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus or Reeves' An Old Christmas Card for awhile, and they're a kick. Plus you get

good old Buck Owens on Santa Looked A Lot Like Daddy.

Travis Tritt's version of Santa Looked A Lot Like Daddy on Christmas Country is a straight copy of Owens, but not as good. And the CD starts off with snooze-worthy renditions of Here Comes Santa Claus by Little Texas and Blue Christmas by Clay Walker.

But Warner Bros. Compiler Paige Levy did have the good taste to end with Kathy Mattea's very warm version of The Christmas Song.

Arista's Star Of Wonder sticks with its own star-studded roster, and executive producer Jim Scherer at least coaxed mostly new recordings out of stars such as Blackhawk (We Three Kings) and Steve Wariner (Silent Night).

And the guys from irrepressible group BR5-49 slick back their hair and deliver a version of It Came Upon A Midnight Clear straight out of a church pew — except for Don Herron's sweeping steel guitar.

The 1980s supergroup Alabama put out their second Christmas album, Christmas Volume II. There are three of

dies including Little Drummer Boy, but mostly Alabama takes the riskier road of unfamiliar material. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. It won't matter to their fans who will buy it regardless.

For those less star-obsessed, two releases come highly recommended. If you buy just one new Christmas CD this year, get "gifts" by the Nashville Mandolin Ensemble on Columbia Records. A virtual orchestra of mandolin players takes on classical pieces like Carol Of The Bells and Tchaikovsky's Dance Of The Mirlitons, and it's stunning. It will work as background music or stand up to close listening.

Also, there's Snow Angels, which came out in 1994 on Hear Records and is being reissued this year by plucky Nashville Independent Compass Records. The most famous name on Snow Angels is Joan Osborne, but selections by Pierce Penit, James McCandless and Jim Infantino and Jonatha Brooks are all outstanding. Good low-key holiday music, and an introduction to some artists who all have a lot to offer the rest of the year, too.

Lebanese President Elias Hrawi (3rd from left) with his wife Mona (2nd from left) and Foreign Minister Fares Bouex (right) attend the official opening of the famed Casino du Liban.

The casino went through a \$50 million facelift to restore it to its former glory as the Middle East's most famous gambling and entertainment centre before civil war broke out in 1975 and forced the casino to close (Reuters photo)

Famed Casino du Liban rises from ashes

By Hitham Haddadin
Reuters

JOUNIEH, Lebanon — Casino Du Liban, a famed playground for Arab kings and European socialites before Lebanon's civil war, reopens this month after a 20-year closure hoping to attract the international jet-set once again.

The casino, which overlooks the picturesque Bay of Jounieh north of Beirut, reopens after 15 months of restoration work and a \$50 million facelift that has wiped away the damage caused by the war.

A huge new tinted glass facade, which replaces the old one shattered during the 1975-90 war by fighting between sectarian militias, reflects the rays of the sun over the Bay of Jounieh.

"This is part of the phoenix rising from the flames," said Nicholas Crabtree, the casino's British vice president of gaming, in the lav-

ishly refurbished main gaming hall where the dice rolled again on Dec. 4.

Officials hope the reborn casino will reclaim its pre-war renown as the Middle East's main gambling and entertainment centre.

The 60 gaming tables offer everything from black jack, roulette and stud poker to punto banco. The 318 slot machines were imported from Las Vegas.

Mr. Crabtree, of London Club International which will manage gaming, expects the casino to match, if not top its pre-war glory when jet-setters like international actors Yul Brynner and Romy Schneider visited.

"I fully expect those people from all over the world to want to come to visit this casino," Mr. Crabtree said.

"I have been in this industry 26 years and this has always been one of the two names that have always been famous: Monte Carlo

and Casino Du Liban. Now you have the opportunity for the resurrection of this casino," he said.

A string of Western, Arab and Lebanese personalities were among VIPs who enjoyed the casino's world famous floor shows like La Parisienne, Hello and Mais Oui.

Habib Letayef, president of Compagnie Du Casino Du Liban which runs the casino, said the Salle Des Ambassadeurs, which will reopen in late 1997, will feature floor shows even better than yesterday's.

"In Las Vegas they used to wish for similar shows," Mr. Letayef said of the Casino Du Liban's pre-war extravaganzas that were directed by Charley Henschis.

"The Sputnik Show was launched here: Satellites coming down from the top of the hall, chandeliers full of beautiful women coming down, a train on a railroad track, elephants, waterfalls,

and also dolphins coming out of two big pools," Mr. Letayef said.

There was a show where a woman danced inside a giant hubble bubble... There was room for 10 to 12 horses to run in the hall. It's like you were watching a movie. It was a fantastic show."

Inaugurated on Jan. 1, 1958, the casino featured stars like Charles Aznavour, Johnny Hallyday and Dalida. The Miss Europe pageant was held here from 1960-1965.

Mr. Letayef said the new shows would include dancing girls, but the circus theme would be replaced by international magic shows, and three-dimensional image and laser shows, to keep up with changes in the entertainment industry.

The casino will also offer five restaurants with international and Mediterranean cuisine. A 1,200-seat theatre and two more restaurants will open next year and a

five-star 150-room hotel is to be built beside it by the year 2000.

To lure back high rollers like the petro-dollar sheikhs of the 1960s and 1970s and the Japanese, the casino offers three "super special rooms" for the "very special gambler."

"These are special rooms for people who have a lot of money. Gamblers can play here with their friends in private, and need to buy chips worth \$100,000. The minimum bet is \$1,000 or more," Mr. Letayef said.

Lebanese gamblers need to declare that they have a monthly income equivalent to \$2,000 to roll the dice, Mr. Letayef said.

"The casino has not been built for poor people," he said, adding that the Ministry of Finance will check the declarations of income.



Lebanese President Elias Hrawi (3rd from left) with his wife Mona (2nd from left) and Foreign Minister Fares Bouex (right) attend the official opening of the famed Casino du Liban. The casino went through a \$50 million facelift to restore it to its former glory as the Middle East's most famous gambling and entertainment centre before civil war broke out in 1975 and forced the casino to close (Reuters photo)

British theatres fear they face final curtain

By Paul Majendie
Reuters

LONDON — Britain's world-class theatres face the final curtain unless the government saves them from a potentially disastrous cash crisis.

That is the stark message delivered by leading lights of the stage from National Theatre Director Richard Eyre to actor Bob Hoskins.

An independent commission probing the future of the British stage said state-subsidised theatres are the backbone of the £1 billion (\$1.7 billion) arts industry.

Rejecting accusations that they represent elitist pandering to London's "chattering classes," the commission said theatres nationwide attract an annual audience of 23 million compared to 21.8 million who go to soccer matches.

"Great institutions do not suddenly die, they decay and, however vibrant our theatre may still seem, that decay is beginning to show," warned the commission chairman, former newspaper editor Stewart Steven.

Theatres with multi-million deficits

The commission, sponsored by the British Actors' Union

Equity, said 33 theatres around the country now had an accumulated deficit of £8 million (\$13.34 million).

It urged the government to write off the debt and boost the £51.4 million (\$85.74 million) that it gives every year in theatre subsidies.

But times are tough in an era of government belt-tightening and a spokesman for the National Heritage Department which allots arts funding said: "We robustly defend our record."

"We are not going to apologise for the level of funding. The arts are extremely well placed at the moment and we recognise what an international success story they are."

Impresario Cameron Mackintosh and composer Andrew Lloyd Webber have conquered the world with a string of acclaimed hit musicals like Les Miserables and Cats. Mackintosh argues that subsidised theatres are a crucible for the magical talents of tomorrow.

"The international blockbuster musicals that attract millions of people and therefore earn millions in tax revenue have nearly all been created by directors and designers whose main professional experience has been in the subsidised theatre," he said.

Actors are equally swift to acknowledge that debt.

Hoskins backs regional theatre

Bob Hoskins, who has now risen to Hollywood stardom, said: "For people like me who didn't go to drama school, regional theatre is the only way to learn the business. These places promote the brilliant talent this country produces."

David Sochet, who won international fame as detective Hercule Poirot, said: "Without subsidised theatre, I would have no career at all."

The launch of Britain's National Lottery two years ago was heralded with joy in the arts community which hoped for a huge new source of funding.

But theatres have found themselves in the invidious position of being granted funds for much needed building refurbishment but not having enough money to mount productions.

Britain's most prolific playwright, Alan Ayckbourn, complained: "Until somebody does something about this ludicrous lottery situation, we are going to finish up with beautiful buildings and nothing going on in them."

State funding 'confused, incoherent'

The National Heritage Department has conceded that

point by allowing grants in future for productions. But the spokesman stressed: "We are not simply going to write off debts but ensure that arts organisations put their houses in order as part of the grant."

But the independent commission maintained that state funding for the theatre, one of the biggest tourist attractions in London today, was confused, incoherent and unstable.

It said the arts had been one of the prime victims of local government reorganisation. Theatres had to cut down on the number of plays they produced and cast sizes were also trimmed. It argued that wages were abysmally low and training woefully inadequate for nurturing the stars of tomorrow.

National Theatre Director Eyre delivered an impassioned plea for theatre in an increasingly materialistic society where he said "the treasury always regarded giving taxpayers' money to the arts as a soap-run for the self-indulgent."

"The arts, above all, help us to make sense of the world, they help us to fit the disparate pieces together," he said.

"Art is all the things that politics isn't: It's passionate, ambiguous, complex, mysterious and thrilling. It is our means of redemption, it's the image of our humanity."

Only days before Christmas, the Oscar contender movie rush begins

By Karen Lowe
Agence France Presse

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — It is Christmas time and that means an avalanche of new movies — some crass cash grabbers and others that are slipping in under the wire to be a 1996 Oscar contender.

More than two dozen films are being released in theatres in the final three weeks of the year to tap holiday spenders while others seek the added boon that comes with the Oscar for best actor, movie, etc.

"It has become a custom," said John Krier, of Exhibitor Relations, which keeps tabs on the box-office take. "They rush these films out at the end of the year because they don't want the academy to forget about them."

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences hands out its Oscar golden statuette awards in March for the best movies of 1996 and studios want their pictures fresh in the members' minds when they vote.

To be on the safe side,

studios have spent tens of millions of dollars for full-page newspaper advertisements and television trailers. Trade magazines are robust with self-congratulatory movie showcase ads.

The box-office bounty that comes during that 10-day holiday period when individuals and families are looking for entertainment make the end of year movie blitzkrieg almost irresistible.

The five weeks between Thanksgiving and new year's account for 15 per cent of ticket sales.

Last year, the two week period beginning Dec. 22 through the end of the year was more than \$380 million, a box-office record and one that will be broken this year, Krier said.

But even the much-coveted Oscar is not just a matter of recognising excellence. An Oscar award can, in some cases, increase box-office earnings by 20 per cent, said Krier.

Philip Garfinkle of Entertainment Data Inc. said that this is also

the time of year when film critics put together their "top ten" list of movies and that can greatly influence box-office income.

"That gets a lot of publicity," Garfinkle said. "It becomes a self-perpetuating publicity situation."

He added that this is also the time when studios take a good hard look at the competition and decide whether they think their movie stands a chance of beating out their rivals for the Oscars.

"They may not be ready for a national release in a thousand theatres or more, but they can show the movie in a few theatres in New York and Los Angeles to make the deadline for the Oscars," he said.

But there are inherent risks in rushing in. With so much competition, a movie that fails to outshine its rivals can lose big time while even the winners have to split the spoils among themselves.

Movies like Mars Attacks, Jingle All The Way, and Beavis And

Butthead Do America allow you to park your brain under your seat and ask for nothing but your money, leaving Oscar competition for the grownups.

Last minute Oscar hopefuls include the lightly praised Evita in which Madonna delivers a powerful performance in the movie version of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical.

Jerry Maguire, with Tom Cruise as a sports agent who takes the moral high ground, has also scored well with critics and at the box-office, pulling in more than \$17 million in its first weekend.

Shine has gotten rave reviews for Australian director Scott Hick's movie about classical pianist David Helfgott's battle with depression.

The crucible, Arthur Miller's classic play about good and evil in early New England, starring Winona Ryder and Daniel Day-Lewis, was a difficult adaptation but the New York Times said it "transcended time and place."

A solid movie but a marketing challenge is The People Vs. Larry Flynt starring Woody Harrelson as pornographer Flynt championing freedom of speech rights with rocker Courtney Love playing his wife.

Critics are also waiting for the release of Jane Campion's The Portrait Of A Lady, from the novel by Henry James, starring Nicole Kidman.

They will go up against earlier releases that received critical acclaim like Fargo, Britain's family drama Secrets And Lies, and Breaking The Waves, which won awards at the Cannes Film Festival.

As for a probable winner, there is no consensus.

"The quality of films out there is higher than it has been for awhile," Krier said. "It will be competitive."

Burberrys gains another Queen's Award

BURBERRYS OF London, renowned worldwide for its classic, traditional clothing of the highest quality, has won its sixth Queen's Award for export — an achievement unequalled by any other U.K. clothing company.

Combining excellent craftsmanship with modern design, Burberrys represents the best of British style, exemplified by this outfit (including the lightweight raincoat), from its spring and summer collection.

The "Burberry" (raincoat) is a name that appears in the Oxford English Dictionary. Although it has become a generic word for a good quality raincoat, rainwear represents only 10 per cent of the company's sales. As well as a complete collection of clothing for men, women and children — including ranges of accessories, knitwear, sportswear and scarves — Burberrys markets many other products, from fragrances to whisky.

Burberrys was founded in 1856 and is recognised internationally as the quintessential British brand. Overseas sales represent 75 per cent of the company's sales with particularly strong performances in accessories, knitwear and the Thomas Burberry Collection — a modern collection that captures the mood of the moment.

The collection, named after the founder, is aimed at young men and women who expect well-made, informal clothes that reflect good taste. The division increased exports by over £30 million in the last

three years and sold to 46 countries. It has stores in major cities, including New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Honolulu, Paris, Geneva, Zurich and Düsseldorf — London Press Service.





Features

Christmas celebrations — legends and traditions

By Hanna Shomali

The following article touches different opinions and beliefs of ancient and modern generations regarding some Christmas customs and celebrations:

Midnight mass

Mass is said at midnight, because it is generally believed that Christ was born at that hour. There is, of course, no historical evidence to uphold this pious belief which has its source in the Book of Wisdom, Chapter 18 verses 14 and 15 which run as follows:

"For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, thy almighty word leapt down from heaven from thy royal throne, as a fierce conqueror into the midst of the land of destruction."

Medieval theologians applied this, as a prophetic reference, to the "incarnation". Midnight has never been assigned as the official time for the first mass. It is merely prescribed that it should be said "in nocte", i.e., during the night. Hence, in many places, the first mass is celebrated before dawn, at four or five in the morning.

During the early centuries, the Roman regula-

tions prescribed that the first mass should be celebrated "ad galli cantum" i.e., when the cock crows, which was at about three o'clock.

Among the French, it is an old custom to hold a joyful family gathering and a traditional meal directly after midnight mass. In Spain, people walk in the street after midnight mass with torches, tambourines and guitars, singing and greeting each other.

In some sections of England, Ireland and Scotland, a quaint and unusually interesting custom was practised in medieval times. One hour before midnight the big bell of the church would begin to toll its slow, solemn message of mourning, and it would thus continue for the whole hour, as if tolling for a funeral. But at midnight, just as the clock would strike twelve, all the bells would suddenly ring out in a merry peal of Christmas joy. This tolling from eleven to twelve was called "the devil's funeral" for, according to the old legend, the devil died when Christ was born.

The first live broadcast of midnight mass, throughout the world, via satellite, was on Christmas Eve 1973, from the Church of Nativity, to enable all the

Christians living abroad to commemorate the great event, the happy birth of the "Prince of Peace".

Christmas candles

A very old custom is the burning of candles every night during Advent for a few minutes, while members of the family say a common prayer in preparations for Christmas.

All other lights are extinguished and only the flames of the candles spread their peaceful glow to remind the faithful that they are to prepare themselves for the Advent of Christ, the light of the world. The candles, four in number, are attached to a wreath of laurel or spruce, one candle each week of Advent. On Christmas Eve, a large candle is placed in the centre of the wreath, symbolising Christ, the Lord.

This is the "Christmas Candle." The Advent wreath was widely used in churches and houses during the past century, and is still used in Germany and Austria.

Christmas tree

It may seem an unusual practice to bless the Christmas tree, but it is one worth thinking about. It would be an excellent

opportunity to remind the faithful of the part played by a tree in the sins of our first parents, and the sacred wood of the "tree" on which Jesus Christ, whose birthday we celebrate, wrought our redemption.

There are different opinions which the historians hold regarding the Christmas tree.

The Christmas tree is completely Christian in origin, and historians have never been able to connect it in any way with ancient Germanic Asiatic mythology. The origin of the Christmas tree goes back to the medieval German mystery plays. One of the most popular of these was the "Paradise Play", representing the creation of man, the sin of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from paradise.

The "Paradise Play" was usually closed with the consoling promise of the coming Saviour and a reference to "His incarnation." This made the "Paradise Play" a favourite pageant for Advent, and its closing scenes used to lead directly to the story of Bethlehem.

After the suppression of mystery plays, the "Paradise Tree" found its way into the homes of the faithful. In the fifteenth century, the custom developed

of decorating the tree, already bearing apples, with small wafers representing the Eucharist. Thus, in symbols, the three which had borne the fruit of sin now bore the saving fruit of the Eucharist. These wafers were later replaced by little pieces of pastry cut in the shape of stars, angels, hearts, flowers and bells.

It is generally believed that the first Christmas tree was of German origin, dating from Boniface, English missionary to Germany in the 8th century, who replaced the sacrifices to Odin's sacred oak by a fir tree adorned in tribute to the Christ child.

It is known that the German Prince Albert, soon after his marriage to Queen Victoria, introduced the tree into England and that German immigrants brought the custom to the United States.

The Christmas tree nowadays, in many homes, with its gaily coloured lights and sparkling decorations, with its branches illuminated with coloured candles and hung with ornaments and all kinds of gifts, is the subject of our children's admiration at Christmas. It is good to renew old tradition of carols sung to family music and of the family rosary said round the tree on

Christmas night, before drawing lots.

Father Christmas legend — Santa Claus

At Christmas, one generally thinks of a happy and popular custom that is that hanging of stockings on Christmas Eve. It may be hard to realise how simple it all began long ago. In the days when a fireplace was a house's only source of heat, stockings, as well as other clothes, were often hung before the fire at night to warm and dry with the heat of the dying embers.

Shoes, too, were placed there, and in some countries the children find their gifts in shoes instead of stockings.

If the spirit of Saint Nicholas comes down the chimney, then the first thing he would bump into would be shoes and stockings! The first Saint Nicholas was a real person who was a bishop in Asia Minor in the fourth century; he is probably the source of our "Santa Claus" who fills children's stockings with gifts.

The transformation of Saint Nicholas into "Father Christmas" occurred first in Germany, then in France, his feast day being celebrated on Christmas or New Year's

day. Dutch Protestant settlers in the city of New York replaced Saint Nicholas by the benevolent magician who became known as Santa Claus, thus further contributing to spreading his folklore. In the United States and England, Saint Nicholas is patron of Christmas, traditionally regarded as a festival of the family and of children when presents are exchanged.

The story of Saint Nicholas is that the bishop wished to give the three daughters of a poor nobleman enough money so that they might marry; but he wished to do this in secret. On three successive nights, he threw into the nobleman's house a little bag of gold, one for each daughter.

The legend says that he threw the bags down the chimney and one of them fell into the stocking that was hung there to dry.

On the third night, it is said, Saint Nicholas was discovered as he was making his generous gift; the nobleman had stayed awake to see who the benefactor of his daughters might be. From that time on, the story was told of Saint Nicholas' goodness of heart and he became the patron saint of children.

And it is said that when we find an orange or a tan-

gerine in the toe of a Christmas stocking, it is a symbol of Saint Nicholas' little bags of gold thrown down a chimney sixteen hundred years ago.

Christmas greeting cards

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when postal rates became cheaper, people started to send written greetings and good wishes to their relatives and friends, before the feast of Christmas. It is claimed that, the first Christmas greeting card was engraved in 1842 by a 16-year-old London artist, William M. Egley, but that it failed to arouse interest among his friends.

A few years later, special cards were privately printed in Britain by a few individuals who designed them for their personal use.

It was many years before the manufacture and sale of cards was commercialised. By 1860, they were on the market and became quite common by about 1868.

The writer, a BA in philosophy from the Latin Patriarchy Seminary in Jerusalem, is a retired teacher. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

Parliament begins review of 1997 draft budget

(Continued from page 1)

workforce. The committee calls on the government to improve the salaries of its employees proportionately with the increase in prices.

6) Despite the fact that unemployment rates dropped from 15 per cent to 13 per cent in 1996 due to the opening of foreign labour markets for Jordanians, the committee feels that poverty and unemployment cannot be addressed without economic development projects. The committee calls on the ministries of labour and social development to:

A. Enforce the labour law giving priority in employment to Jordanians.

B. Expand the vocational training services.

C. Increase the activities of the National Aid Fund and the Employment and Development Fund.

D. Set up the projected social security net.

7) The committee noticed that funds allocated for subsidising basic commodities amount to JD72 million for 1997, down from JD102 million in 1996. It calls on the government to increase subsidies and to ensure that they reach the poor only.

8) The committee appreciates the government's endeavours to stabilise the rate of exchange of the Jordanian currency and increase the country's foreign reserves.

9) The committee has noticed a retreat in the amounts of foreign grants to Jordan which were estimated at JD169 million for 1997 down from JD191.3 million in 1996. The committee urges the government to seek additional foreign assistance.

10) The public expenditure for 1997 is estimated at JD1,916 million, registering 49 per cent increase over the 1996 figures. Current spending for 1997 is estimated at 6.6 per cent exceeding the four per cent rate as contained in the prime minister's directives to the Ministry of Finance. The capital spending for 1997 grew by 22.2 per cent over the 1996 figures.

11) The committee noticed that without the grants and other assistance the deficit in the 1997 budget is JD225 million and if debt servicing is included the real deficit will rise to JD483.5 million. The committee calls on the government to take the appropriate measures to increase its local revenues and rationalise public spending.

The committee recommended the following:

(The Ministry of Finance)

a) A reduction of the customs duty and taxes on

means of public transport and the trucks and farm equipment.

b) Improvement of the living conditions of pensioners.

c) Submission of the budgets of the semi-independent public institutions to Parliament for examination.

(The Central Bank)

The committee appreciates the bank's endeavours to ensure stability to the Jordanian currency and proposes that the Central Bank tighten control on the financial institutions and banks with a view to saving the country any financial or monetary imbalances.

(The Ministry of Planning)

The committee urges the ministry to steer funding to income-generating projects and so help the country become self sufficient. The committee also calls on the ministry to turn down any grants if given to Jordan on conditions that does not respect the Kingdom's national interests.

(The Ministry of Public Works and Housing)

The committee noticed that the funds allocated for the ministry's projects are very little and calls on the government to earmark larger funds which should be used in the maintenance and building of roads. The committee also demands that the Council of Ministers endorse recommendations passed by a seminar on promoting the contracting sector's services, that the Central Bank sponsor the "exportation" of contracting services by providing credit facilities and guarantees.

(The Ministry of Agriculture)

The committee calls for the restructuring of the ministry with a view to increasing its role in boosting production and marketing of products, the restructuring of the agricultural sector, adopting a long term agricultural policy to organise production and marketing, exempting agricultural inputs from taxes and addressing farmers' difficulties in paying back their debts.

(The Ministry of Water and Irrigation)

The committee calls for the modernisation of water networks, prevent unauthorised and excessive consumption of underground water resources, restructuring the Water Authority and the Jordan Valley Authority to promote their services, building more dams and finalise studies on the Red Sea-Dead Sea canal.

(The Ministry of Industry and Trade)

The committee calls on the ministry to speed up the upgrading of current regula-

tions on encouraging and promoting investments, organising the Amman International Fair to promote sales of Jordanian products, tighten control on shareholding companies to protect the interests of shareholders and investors and create more free trade zones.

(The Ministry of Health)

The committee calls for the expansion of the health insurance scheme to cover all beneficiaries of the Social Security Corporation, increasing the number of health centres, controlling the dispensing of medicines in government pharmacies.

(The Ministries of Education and Higher Education)

The committee calls on the government to amend the universities law with a view to directing education to the local community's needs, reexamine the student admission system in state universities, increase the scholarships to needy students, coordinate between the two ministries in educational affairs and offer incentives to teachers working in remote areas.

(The Ministry of Administrative Development)

The committee calls on the ministry to work out a comprehensive plan for qualifying serving employees, draw up a new system for employment in government offices, cancel the present Civil Service Commission's system of recruiting employees to work for the government.

(The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities)

The committee calls on the ministry to restructure its departments technically and administratively, tighten protection measures concerning the artefacts and improve tourist facilities.

(The Armed Forces)

The committee considers the Armed Forces and the security services as the shield that protects the country's security and stability and it appreciates their sacrifices for the nation. The committee recommends continued support for them.

The committee recommended that the House endorse the draft budget after taking into consideration the committee's recommendations and requested that the government commit itself to its implementation.

After hearing the committee's report, 36 deputies expressed their desire to address the House. Following are major excerpts from the speeches of deputies who spoke on Tuesday.

Muflih Al Lawzi called on the government to curb the increasing cost of living at a time when great hopes are pinned on imminent econom-

ic recovery.

Ibrahim Zeid Kilani called for controlling public expenditure and applying new legislation and regulations, giving the private sector a major role in economic development.

"I appreciate the government's move to activate the role of the private sector, which is a major pillar in the state policy," he said. He called for increasing allocations for social services benefiting the poor.

Dr. Kilani called on the government to enact new legislation and revise and update existing ones to encourage investment in the country.

He criticised the television programme "Ahlan Hukuma," saying that it is not in the interest of anybody to make fun of people and to mock at them.

"I do not know for whose interest it is to waste public funds on such trifling and sarcastic programmes," he said calling on the government not to privatise radio and TV, saying that they have been financed by taxpayers.

Nader Abu Shaar said the allocations for the social safety nets was not sufficient.

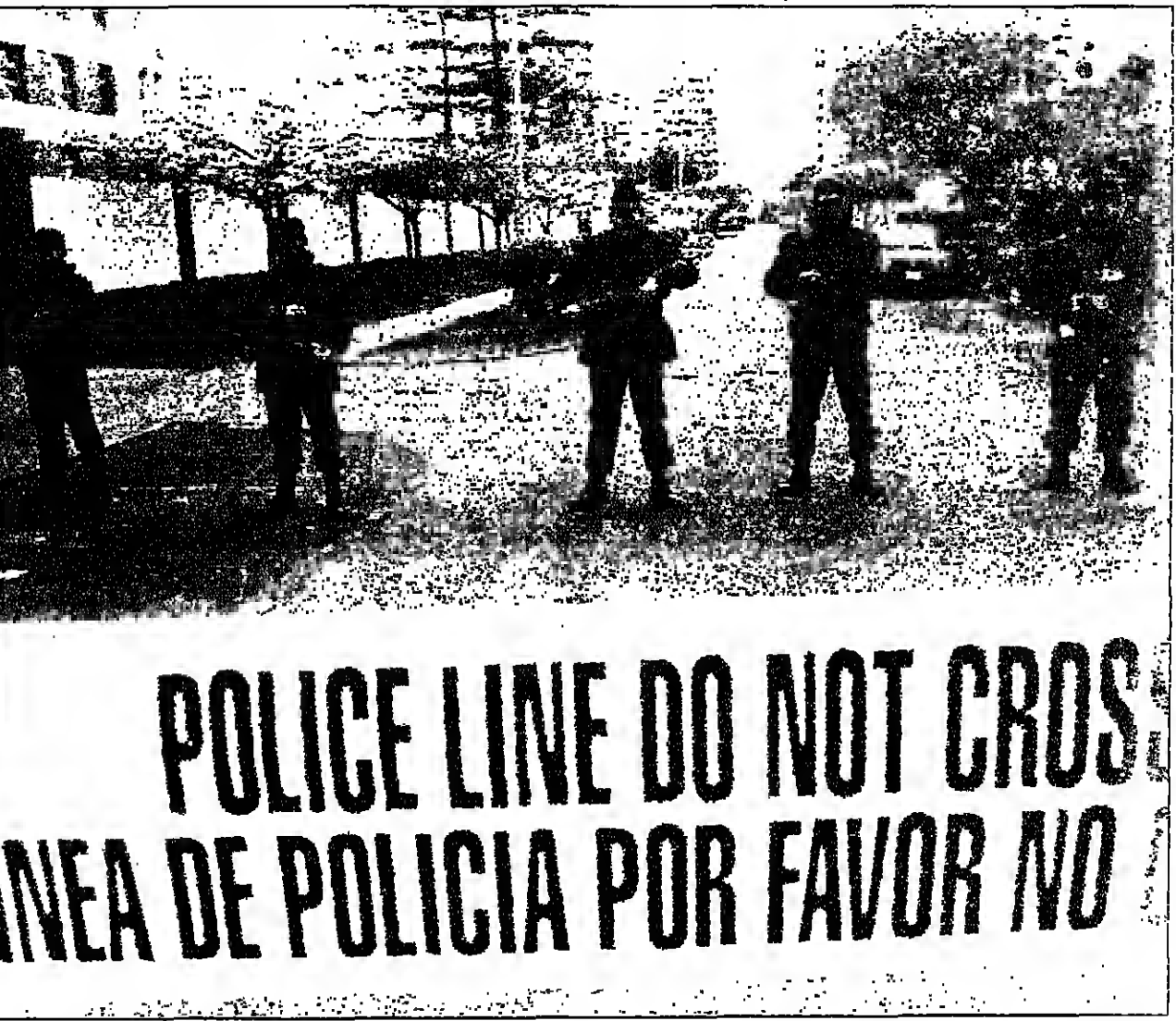
"I wish the government could redirect more resources to intensive labour projects, which could help to ease the unemployment problem," he said. Dr. Abu Shaar called for improving incomes and living conditions of civil servants, and stressed the need to link their salaries with the annual inflation rates.

Dr. Abu Shaar said the Social Security Corporation (SSC) is equipped to provide health insurance for retired people, through implementing a comprehensive health insurance plan.

Saleh Sha'wath called on the government to formulate and implement a comprehensive plan to address the problems of poverty and unemployment. "I call on the government to do justice to the poor. The poor do not need the National Aid Fund, nor do they need to beg. They and their children need social security and equal opportunities in jobs," he said.

Mr. Sha'wath called on the government to improve relations with Iraq, which constitutes, "our strategic depth and is our Arab brother."

Tral Al Qadi called on the government to enhance the audit, inspection and the anti-corruption apparatus and to give them full authority. He also called on the government to control government spending and to pay special attention to the needs of the north badia region.



Peruvian police stand guard behind police lines outside the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima on Tuesday (Reuters photo)

Lima embassy hostage crisis enters second week

(Continued from page 1)

announced on Tuesday that Japan would hire more security guards to protect its diplomatic offices overseas from terrorist attack.

Popular anger in Japan boiled over into immigrant bashing in Isezaki, an industrial town north of Tokyo, where shops and cars owned by Peruvians were stoned.

The Peruvian community in and around Isezaki, made up largely of Peruvians of Japanese descent, is perhaps the largest in Japan.

accounting for about 4,000 of the 15,000 Peruvians in the country.

"I'm really disappointed by the Japanese," Peruvian-Japanese grocery store owner Pedro Nishimata told Reuters. "I thought the Japanese were more mature."

In Peru, the government kept electricity and telephone services to the building cut on Tuesday, although water service was expected to be resumed after released hostages said that lack of water in the residence was endangering the

health and safety of those still inside.

Red Cross officials also said they planned to set up a clinic inside the compound later on Tuesday to deal with medical problems among the hostages, which include cases of eye infection and diarrhoea.

The rebels, led by Nestor Cerna Carolini, a textile worker turned revolutionary, have demanded that the government free their jailed MRTA comrades before ending the siege, but Mr. Fujimori has flatly refused.

The rebels have booby-

trapped the entrances of the building and carry backpacks full of explosives. Police say the guerrillas include four sharpshooters at strategic windows armed with telescopic night-sight rifles.

The Red Cross, which sent in Christmas cakes and other food to feed the captives, said it planned to send them "something special" — perhaps a Christmas dinner — on Tuesday evening.

It was not clear if the rebels would permit the gift, however.

Hebron deal could be key to Syria talks — Mubarak

(Continued from page 1)

The Egyptian president also said he was hopeful that "the current negotiations would finally result in a solution and put the peace process back on track."

Mr. Mubarak, in Monday night's phone call, told Mr. Netanyahu of his "satisfaction over any progress made towards reaching an agreement acceptable to the two parties (the Israelis and the Palestinians) and likely to end the existing problems," the government Al

Akhbar newspaper also reported Tuesday.

Mr. Mubarak's meeting with Mr. Mordechai was held in a hotel at the Red Sea resort of Hurgada and included a working lunch offered by Mr. Mubarak and attended by the Israeli delegation along with Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal Al Ganzuri.

Mr. Mordechai landed in Hurgada aboard an air force plane for the one-day visit and was greeted by Egyptian Tourism Minister Mamduh Al Beltagui.

The talks included several Egyptian officials, including Defence Minister Hussein Tamiawi, Foreign Minister Amr Musa and political adviser to the president, Osama Al Baz, along with Egypt's ambassador to Israel, Mohammad Bassiouni.

Before leaving Israel, Mr. Mordechai said his talks would focus on easing recent tensions in Israeli-Egyptian relations, stressing that Cairo "has a major role to play in promoting the peace process," accord-

ing to a ministry statement.

It was Mr. Mordechai's first visit to Egypt since it signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979. As a young army officer, he fought on Egyptian soil during the 1973 war.

Mr. Mubarak has repeatedly demanded that Israel carry out the redeployment from Hebron as proof of its commitment to the Middle East peace process launched under the former Labour government.

ESCWA predicts 3.7% growth for region in '97

By Ghalia Alul and Maria Bizri
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The gross domestic product (GDP) of the ESCWA (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) region is likely to grow by 3.7 per cent in 1997 due to an expected change in international oil prices, ESCWA Executive Secretary Hazem Biblawi said Tuesday.

According to a preliminary overview of economic development for 1996, released by the commission, "the region's economic outlook would be influ-

enced greatly by changes in international oil prices, developments in the Middle East peace process and implementation of economic reforms in ESCWA member countries in addition to the return of Iraqi oil to international oil markets and the lifting of United Nations economic sanctions on Iraq."

At a press conference, Dr. Biblawi reviewed the 1996 economic development report and provided a brief outlook for 1997.

According to Dr. Biblawi,

although next year's expected growth in GDP would be lower than the 4.3 per cent rate achieved in 1996, it would be higher than the 2.1 per cent growth rate registered in 1995.

The report expects a fall in oil prices to below \$20 per barrel during 1997.

"As a result, the balance of trade surpluses are expected to decline in the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC), compared with their 1996 levels. In fact, the ratio of budget deficits to GDP in the GCC countries, which continue to rely heavily on oil revenues to finance expenditure, will

increase," the report said. It predicted that "the ratios of budget deficits to GDP in the member countries with more diversified economies are expected to further decline compared with their 1996 levels."

Both GCC and other ESCWA member countries, however, will still face the ongoing "challenge" of relatively high unemployment rates, Dr. Biblawi said.

"Progress in lowering unemployment rates in the region has been slow," said Dr. Biblawi, adding that "the problem of unemployment is the most difficult to solve."

"The 1997 socio-economic development for the ESCWA region will greatly depend on exogenous factors: The oil prices in international markets, developments in the peace process as well as the extent of governments' abilities to

implement economic reforms," Dr. Biblawi stressed.

Many countries of the ESCWA region continue to implement economic reform programmes. These countries include Jordan, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Oman, Syria and Yemen.

According to the report, ESCWA member countries have benefited from the rise in international oil prices which helped raise

the oil revenues of most member countries in the region.

"The average per-barrel price increase of 17.5 per cent in 1996 resulted in an increase of \$14 billion in oil revenues which totalled \$94.4 billion for the region," the report stated.

In his presentation of the 1996 economic development report, Dr. Biblawi

(Continued on page 9)

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates		Prices as at 24/12/96 19:24							
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NUE	FRF
US Dollar	1.5553	0.5978	1.3437	114.46	1.3655	1529.22	1.7464	5.2525	
DE Mark	0.6430		0.3840	0.8640	73.58	0.8777	0.6304	4.1230	3.3778
GB Sterling	1.8728	2.6021		2.2503	191.31	2.2842	2558.39	2.9217	8.7674
CH Franc	0.7442	115.66	0.4443		55.14	1.0155	1137.39	129.91	3.9081
JP Yen	0.0067	1.3582	0.5217	1.1734		1.1925	13.35	152.51	4.5669
CA Dollar	0.7123	1.1408	0.4394	0.3793	1.18		1121.87	1.2807	3.5555
IT Lira	0.0007	1.0165	0.3805	0.0878	1337.97	0.6924		11.41	3.4328
NL Guilder	0.5726	89.01	0.3420	76.44	65.50	0.7517	675.39		3.0066
FR Franc	0.1904	0.2960	0.1137	25.5724	21.77	0.2599	33.24	33.2400	

Energy		USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Brent	24.25	24.10				
W. Texas	24.95	26.35				
Bunby	24.25	24.10				
Dubai	21.23	21.38				
UL Gas	213.00	212.00				

Mid-East Currencies		USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4148	0.1594	0.3555	30.5325	
AE Dirham	0.2724	0.4337	0.1627	0.3635	31.1974	
KW Dinar	3.3356	5.16941	1.99402	4.48632	361.971	
BE Dinar	0.3770	4.12712	1.58578	3.58781	303.787	
CV Pound	2.1191	3.2949	1.2657	2.8466	242.484	

Metal Prices		USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Gold (oz)	368.5	369				
Silver (oz)	4.83	4.65				
Platinum (oz)	370.65	371.85				
AL (3 Months)	1558	1560				
CU (3 Months)	2131	2136				
Zinc (3 Months)	1073	1078				
Lead (3 Months)	715	720				
NI (3 Months)	6475	6505				

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)		Period	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Cincy	Month	1	5.54	5.46	5.50	5.59	5.68
		3	5.94	6.44	6.50	6.69	6.88
JPY	Month	1	0.13	0.43	0.43	0.53	0.30
		3	3.06	3.00	2.94	3.00	3.06
FRF	Month	1	3.28	3.27	3.31	3.27	3.27
		3	2.25	1.26	1.75	1.21	1.61
ITL	Month	1	7.37	7.06	6.84	6.51	6.50
		3					

Energy		USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Coffee (c/lb)	117.83	Spot				
Cocoa (c/lb)	1373	Spot				
Sugar (c/lb)	312	Spot				
Wheat (c/lb)	132	Spot				
Soy (c/lb)	21.39	Spot				
Tea (c/lb)	125	Spot				
Barley (c/lb)	2.18	Spot				
Rice (c/lb)	470	Spot				

JOD Cross Rates		USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
US Dollar	0.708	0.710				
GB Sterling	1.1897	1.1916				
DE Mark	0.4553	0.4576				
CH Franc	0.8292	0.8316				
FR Franc	0.1348	0.1355				
JP Yen	0.8185	0.8218				
NL Guilder	0.4058	0.4076				
IT Lira	0.4634	0.4657				

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

1 Woeful cry

5 Rio Grande feeder

10 Delighted

14 Ledge

15 Banish

16 Nobelist Wiesel

17 Hubbub

18 Piano technician

19 Tropical tree

20 Start of a quote

23 Holiness

24 Laundry cycle

25 Saunter

28 October stone

30 Saem

31 Sanctuary

33 Escape, as from prison

36 More of quote

40 Recolor

41 River duck

42 Eminent Israeli

43 Curved molding

44 Stadia

46 — acid

49 Pevarotti, for one

51 End of quote

57 Waste allowance

58 Sutting

59 Pot source

60 Popeye's saint?

61 — Gay

62 Coax

63 Soprano

64 Wooden peg

85 Johnny-on-the-

DOWN

1 Italian wine city

2 Pride member

3 "Hawkeye"

4 Laggard

5 Sea bird

6 Ralioce

7 Actress/model

8 Crawford

9 Buttarine

10 Vassal

11 Draw back

12 Crazy as —

13 Annoy persistently

21 Lubricant

22 Monsieur's money

25 Moved smoothly

26 Theater award

27 Repetition

28 Partner of above

29 Sly

31 Conceal

32 Vital statistic

33 Property claim

34 Where Gobi is

35 Planet

37 — muton sleeve

38 Prevaricate

39 Retired

43 — customer

44 Tamper, as metal

45 Wand

46 In quest of

47 Actress Thomas

48 Bits of gossip

49 Hurl

50 Two under par

52 Secondhand

53 TV's Jay

54 Find fault

55 Jason's ship

56 — leureate

by Samuel K. Flegner

EVEN FLAHS OKRA

BELA ROGET HEEP

BEAN AGENA ITRAS

PLAYMISTYFORME

AEC STOA

CASTRO HUNTS

THEENFORCER ATA

REND RAP ABET

SAO THEGAUNTLET

DRAWA NAMELV

LILT PAD

PAINTYOURWAGON

OMNI APNEA IBID

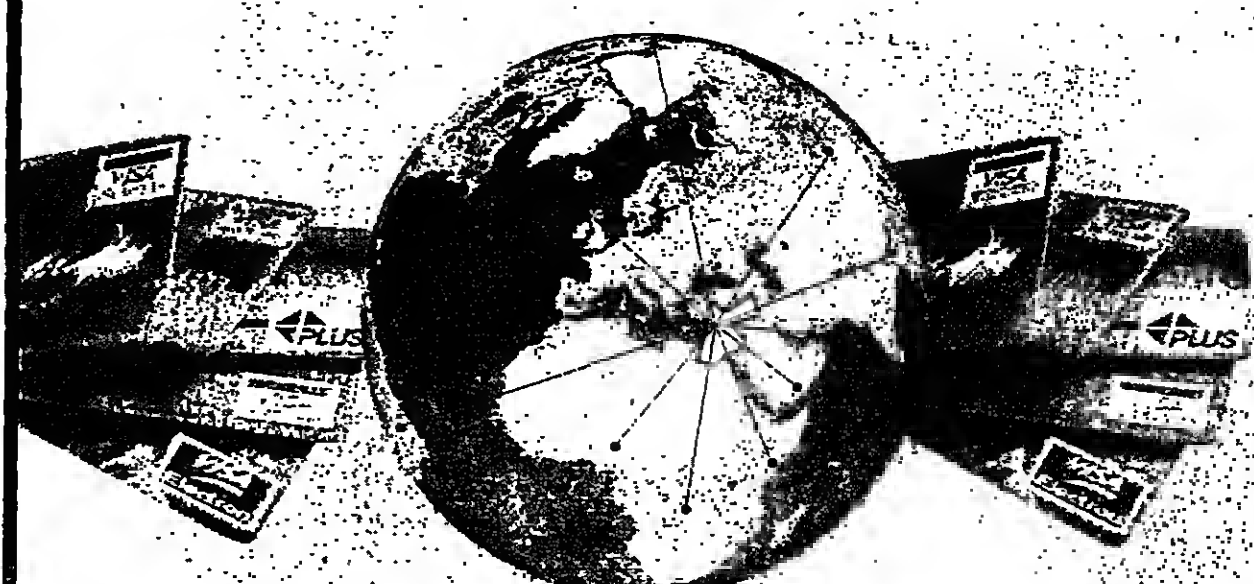
LAIC RATER GOLD

ONTO DRONE SEES

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Peanuts

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'VE EVER HAD A REAL THANKSGIVING DINNER, HAVE YOU?

TURKEY WITH DRESSING, MASHED POTATOES, GRAVY, GREEN SALAD, PUMPKIN PIE.

DOG FOOD.

Andy Capp

NO GO, TOM! ONLY SELL PIGEONS TO PEOPLE WHO KNOW HOW TO HANDLE AND LOOK AFTER THEM PROPERLY.

SORRY, BUT THAT'S THE WAY I AM.

DEFINITELY, I'M THE SAME MYSELF.

HANG ON TO YOUR PRINCIPLES—UNTIL YOU GET A BETTER CASH OFFER.

Mutt'n' Jeff

I LOVE WHAT HAPPENED?

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? ANYBODY HURT?

NO, BUT THE CAR IS!

I WAS DRIVING FINE WHEN SUDDENLY—BANG! SO I BACKED UP BANG! I PULLED OVER BANG!

WHERE DID IT HAPPEN?

IN OUR GARAGE I WAS TRYING TO BACK OUT!

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 25, 1996

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Contact those out-of-state friends today and discuss your career plans with them. Make new acquaintances for greater happiness and contentment. Later this evening will be good for discussing new ideas for success.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Get together with a good advisor today and make plans and arrangements for the days ahead. Take no risks while on the highway to avoid difficulties. Later this evening you can get together with close friends for some fun.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) This is a good day today to be more gregarious and see your friends and acquaintances and you can make new friends as well. Later tonight will be a good time to gain the assistance of a bigwig for your career activities.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Study your cherished aims today and then plan how to gain them. Improve your credit-stand by doing some special favour for close friends a fellow associate which they will reciprocate when you need assistance.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You can see far into the ahead and you are inspired to take on interesting new outlets of career activities which can bring success. Later this evening you can spend some quality time with your loved ones.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Get into a new type of activity which can bring you closer today to someone you admire and respect, so that you can receive an objective opinion on your career activities. Establish better business relations as a result.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Contact the most dynamic persons you know today and find out how they can help you to gain public aims which will be quite beneficial to your overall business activities. This evening can be spent with your mate.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Get an early start on the career activities ahead of you and fine ideas can be yours as a result of your efforts. A fellow associate can give good suggestions on how you can make a plan of action a reality.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Be sure to state your wishes for amusement today and make appointment with close ties for these desires to become a reality. Later this evening will be a good time for you to gain the assistance of knowledgeable people.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Contact the individuals today you want to be better acquainted with and invite them into your home for a casual encounter with your close friends. This evening can be productive by seeking the advice of a bigwig.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You enjoy being gregarious today and run around and see many persons as you cheer and spread good cheer to as many individuals as you possibly can and thereby you will receive this warmth and generosity back then fold.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Study your assets today and know how to get ahead faster in the days ahead. Get financial advice from an expert which could be quite beneficial to your overall development of your career. Later this evening you can relax with your loved ones.

Birthstones of December: Turquoise — Zircon.

Outlook for ESCWA region in 1997 not as good as in 1996

(Continued from page 8)

told the conference that political instability in the region during 1996 has adversely affected the economies of some ESCWA countries.

He said that the stalemate in the Middle East peace process, heavy bombardment of South Lebanon in April as well as closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have impeded the region's economic growth.

The report stated that Iraq's economic growth and development was affected by the continuation of the United Nations economic sanctions which have also adversely

affected the economies of other countries in the region, especially those with traditionally strong economic ties to Iraq.

However, the report added: "Iraq's partial return to the international oil market, as expected with the implementation of the oil-for-food agreement with the U.N., will yield important positive results, not only for Iraq, but also for several neighbouring countries, especially Jordan."

According to ESCWA's study, budget deficit as a ratio of GDP declined in every ESCWA member country in 1996.

This, it added, was mainly

due to the unexpected increase in oil revenues coupled with generally tight government expenditure and higher GDP growth rates in the countries concerned.

The rise in oil revenues have also contributed to a significant increase in the balance of trade surpluses in GCC countries, the report stated.

However, the report added, "in countries with more diversified economies, the deficit in their respective balances of trade widened as their respective imports far exceeded the increase in their exports."

Workers' remittances and

revenues from tourism, while negatively affecting the current account balance of most GCC countries, helped improve the current account balance of the more economically diversified member countries, the report added.

In conclusion, the study perceived the outlook of the ESCWA region for 1997 as positive, although not as good as in 1996.

ESCWA member countries include Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Yemen, Oman and Qatar.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY DECEMBER 27, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Plan how best to add to your present assets today and make your property more valuable. Be with your family tonight and you can make this time special for the ones who live under your roof and there can be harmony.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Go after a personal wish today and gain it easily. If others understand your methods of operation they will cooperate enthusiastically with your efforts.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You can use some private methods of operation today for gaining your long-time wishes. Budget your money more carefully so that you will have funds available for a rainy day and be better equipped to handle lean times.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You can get the aid of a good friend who is dynamic today and likes you very much. Later this evening will be a good time for you to meet with knowledgeable people.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There is an opportunity today to gain the support and backing of a bigwig who is interested in community matter which can make your reputation soar in popularity.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) Plan time today to study into every phase of a new project which greatly appeals to you and thereby you can be successful. Take it easy tonight and relax with your loved ones at home for there are busy time ahead.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) You can handle all responsibilities in a sensible manner today, so make whatever

effort is necessary to get ahead. If anything does go wrong later this evening, seek professional help from those willing to help.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) Be right on your toes today in the outside world if you want cooperation there. Take it easy tonight and relax for the days ahead will prove to be stressful and you will need to be on your toes again to face any difficulties.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Be more efficient at your career activities today and have greater security in the days ahead. Be happy at home later this evening with your loved ones and prepare for a busy week ahead without any difficulties.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your mate has good ideas today, so go along with them instead of criticizing whatever suggestions are made. Make family life more ideal later this evening.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) The daytime today is best for inviting guests into your home and making them feel welcome. Take no risks later this evening where your good name is concerned.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Get letters and other communications handled more seriously today and answer questions wisely since what you say can be misinterpreted which can make you look like you have been misinformed in the eyes of a bigwig.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY DECEMBER 26, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You get good ideas today and you can plan just how to use them wisely in your career activities. A newcomer can inspire you to greater advancement through providing you with the necessary information which can be beneficial.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You have good ideas today which can gain you a cherished wish, so carry through with it and you can make your efforts payoff in increased financial security. Romance is possible with your mate so meet at a special spot.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Try to contact good pals today who can assist you in gaining your aims and desires. State your goals clearly and very soon you will realise the success which generates from your efforts in the days ahead.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You have fine ideas on how to advance today in the outside world, so put them in motion and add prestige to make your efforts a reality. Later this evening you can get together with close friends for some fun activities.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get new plans well-organised today before you see a bigwig who can give you the backing you need at this time. This evening will be a good time to make your career activities take off like a rocket if you are prepared.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) You understand how to make your practical affairs operate more efficiently today if you use more modern methods of operation and you are willing to take that next step towards making your plans of operation go full force.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) The evening today is fine for recreation with the one you love, however, first make the right arrangements for a special location and atmosphere to make the whole time an experience which he or she will not soon forget.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) Make the right moves today and let your fellow associates in on your ideas so that they will have helpful suggestions which could be quite beneficial. Friends can give ideas for handling public matters.


SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Concentrate on how best to make your talents pay off and thereby make your life more financially secure. Come to a better agreement with the one you love and you will be able to eliminate any difficulties which could be present.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Do something new today which can please those dwell with you and can make everyone's lives more harmonious. Talk the days ahead over with your kin later this evening and make some decisions concerning your success.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Hit on the right idea today for increasing production in the days ahead and you can make the life of yourself and your loved ones more beneficial. Gain fine benefits quickly through your efforts with a plan of action you have.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You have fine ideas for increasing your abundance today, so put them in operation and thereby you can make your efforts pay off. You can do it alone, however, it would be quite beneficial if you seek the assistance of others.

Birthingstone of December: Turquoise — Zircos



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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 24/12/1996											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
4.700	4.250	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	9.9	3.13	1	200	960	4.68	4.68	-12	
3.800	2.900	BANK OF JORDAN	11.5	0.00	2	750	2400	3.12	3.20	+08	
1.250	.980	MID-EAST INV. BK.	67.0	0.00	31	21250	21843	1.04	1.04	-02	
2.700	2.120	INDUSTRIAL INV. BK.	5.0	6.36	5	775	1696	2.19	2.19	-	
5.250	4.750	THE HOLDING BK.	12.6	2.94	3	1036	4867	4.70	4.70	-	
3.040	2.440	JOR. KUNAT BANK	20.3	0.00	13	10785	29981	2.75	2.80	+05	
1.120	.880	JOR. GULF BANK	5.7	7.37	4	18600	17670	.96	.95	-01	
4.180	3.480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	17.3	0.00	14	2750	9971	3.65	3.60	-06	
1.550	1.000	PHILADELPHIA INV. BK.	9	0.00	9	2800	3564	1.28	1.28	-	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 191.57	CHG: 0.00	82	58946	92951				
2.400	1.850	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	7.2	8.42	1	500	950	1.95	1.90	-05	
5.090	3.700	ALJAWHAR AL-ARABI	13.6	3.75	8	1334	7094	5.09	5.34	+25	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 117.45	CHG: +0.36	9	1834	8044				
1.830	1.450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.3	7.36	19	14010	22969	1.64	1.63	-01	
2.800	2.090	SHIPPING LINES	10.7	7.87	5	5300	13271	2.50	2.54	+04	
1.830	1.380	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9.8	8.29	10	4661	9.65	9.65	-		
1.260	.880	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	39.0	0.00	9	3550	2710	.80	.76	-04	
.800	.450	MACH. REP. REIT. MAIN.	9	0.00	3	3000	1320	.45	.44	-01	
3.720	3.130	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	13.8	5.75	3	950	1914	3.46	3.48	+02	
1.250	.960	ARABIA EDUCATION	8.2	0.00	1	200	210	1.06	1.05	-01	
2.310	1.690	UNIFIED CO.	10.5	5.00	19	5100	10230	2.03	2.00	-03	
1.200	.820	UNION LAND DEV.	8	0.00	1	500	440	.90	.88	-02	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 112.35	CHG: -0.04	61	32710	53652				
3.740	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.3	2.96	17	8326	28258	3.40	3.38	-02	
3.550	2.710	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	34.6	0.00	3	1650	5283	3.25	3.22	-03	
10.450	8.720	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	9.8	8.29	10	4661	9.65	9.65	-		
1.590	1.150	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	56.0	0.00	4	1000	1265	1.28	1.26	-02	
3.750	1.650	INDUSTRIAL CONH. AGR.	37.0	0.00	3	1100	3025	2.90	2.7	-15	
4.730	3.940	ARAB PHARM. IND.	19.4	5.65	18	5200	18553	3.99	3.85	-08	
5.450	4.500	JOR. CEMENT IND.	7.6	4.10	1	2587	15781	3.75	3.80	+05	
2.400	1.370	JOR. PIPES MANUF.	9.0	7.36	1	100	163	1.63	1.63	-	
7.850	4.250	QAR ALDANA OV. INV.	13.4	4.08	12	3750	18375	4.85	4.90	+05	
5.800	5.130	ARAB ALUM. IND.	9.0	8.24	5	1400	5071	3.80	3.64	-14	
960	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	24	29350	18250	.64	.61	-05	
1.460	1.060	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	7.8	9.01	2	1450	1668	1.15	1.15	-	
1.060	.540	NATIONAL INDS.	10.8	8.22	73	79644	58386	.77	.73	-04	
1.750	.930	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	13	3450	3772	1.13	1.09	-04	
4.700	3.430	ALADITH CO.	21.3	3.16	4	150	570	3.75	3.80	+05	
4.000	2.130	NATL. CABLE WIRE. MFAC	15.8	0.00	2	2000	530	2.70	2.60	-10	
1.340	.670	JOR. SULPHO. CHEM.	9	0.00	2	1000	800	.83	.80	-03	
1.850	1.060	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	26.1	0.00	13	2200	3162	1.48	1.42	-06	
3.560	1.460	UNIV. HOUS. INDS.	8.2	11.63	12	2800	4831	1.75	1.72	-03	
2.080	1.140	JOR. INOS. RESOURCES	16.1	0.00	18	12500	16003	1.29	1.28	-01	
1.500	.840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	25.8	0.00	13	4784	4577	.98	.95	-03	
1.440	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	29.9	0.00	5	2650	3388	1.30	1.27	-03	
1.650	.930	UNION CH. & VEG.	23.9	0.00	5	2050	2004	.98	.97	-01	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 114.83	CHG: -0.44	259	167824	218375				
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 151.31	CHG: -0.17	411	261314	373022				
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 24/12/1996											
.790	.440	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	21.7	0.00	2	700	378	.54	.54	-	
.800	.710	JOR. TRADE FAC.	14.4	0.00	9	5950	3213	.54	.54	-	
.950	.720	NATL. COMMER. CENTERS	8	0.00	8	3700	1610	.45	.43	-02	
.700	.590	UNION INV. SOC.	69.8	0.00	1	3000	735	.73	.73	-	
1.060	.370	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	25	24500	11135	.46	.45	-01	
.950	.690	AL-OANLIYAH 751	15.6	0.00	2	1134	498	.69	.69	-	
.640	.340	JOR. INOS. MATCH-JEMCO	9	0.00	1	1000	360	.36	.36	-02	
.610	.510	ARAB FOOD & VED.	8	0.00	1	600	63	.63	.63	-	
1.760	1.300	NATL. CHLORINE	8	0.00	5	13300	17833	1.40	1.32	-04	
.700	.450	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	9	0.00	10	6500	3250	.51	.50	-01	
1.030	.400	KATL. MOLT. ENG. HAMICO	8	0.00	21	27925	13725	.50	.49	-01	
1.210	.720	JORDAN STEEL	4	0.00	4	1400	1050	.75	.75	-	
1.330	1.020	UNION TOBACCO 751	8	0.00	1	50	41	1.06	1.06	-	
.810	.570	RAZI PHARM. 651	8	0.00	13	17450	4515	.61	.61	-	
.810	.590	INDOS. ENG.	25.9	0.00	4	2250	945	.42	.42	-	
1.430	.760	INDOS. CERAMIC	8	0.00	6	3450	2725	.80	.79	-01	
.590	.360	I. TEXTILE MANUF.	9	0.00	9	1550	779	.50	.49	-02	
.900	.580	PEARL SAN. P. CONV.	8	0.00	4	1750	1243	.73	.71	-02	
.950	.900	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	65.3	0.00	4	3377	3131	.92	.93	+01	
1.500	.530	MID-EAST COMPLEX	8.1	0.00	18	20900	13872	.67	.67	-02	
GRAND TOTAL			148	140680	81424						

JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TOAPI

SEGUS

LAMTEL

ENTHIZ

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: A "O O O O O O O O O O" (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: GAUDY BUMPY PURIFY PALLIO
Answer: What they had for Thanksgiving dinner - THE FAMILY

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Belgium's de Bilde charged with wounding

BRUSSELS (R) — Belgium's de Bilde spent Monday night in jail and has been charged with wounding after punching an opponent in the face, breaking his nose and injuring his eye during a league match, police said on Tuesday.

Gendarmerie captain Philippe Struysaert said de Bilde was questioned on Monday and kept in jail overnight after Aalst player Krist Porte, lodged a formal complaint.

De Bilde, 25, was taken for further questioning to the Brussels public prosecutor's office which decided to release him on Tuesday morning. Deputy Prosecutor Philippe Van Hecke said.

"(De Bilde) has been charged with voluntary wounding, causing inability to work," he said.

Porte, who had been urged by his club to sue de Bilde, is expected to be off for months and still might lose the eye.

The Aalst player, who also suffered slight concussion and possibly a torn retina, was due to undergo nose surgery on Tuesday.

But it may take weeks before the damage to the eye can be assessed as the broken eye socket was still too fragile.

The Belgian Soccer Union said on Tuesday it had suspended de Bilde, who would have to appear for a hearing next month.

Anderlecht had already suspended de Bilde on Sunday.

The incident was shown on nationwide television on Sunday and sparked an outcry of disapproval, together with speculation it meant the end of de Bilde's once glittering career in Belgium.

Soccer Union President Michel d'Hooghe has said he intends to use the television pictures as evidence.

De Bilde, who moved to Anderlecht from Aalst in 1995 after turning down a lucrative offer from Atletico Madrid, became a national celebrity when he won the 1994 award for best Belgian league player.

But he has often played below par at Anderlecht and recently endured a growing barrage of criticism. Belgium coach Wilfried Van Moer dropped

him from his squad for the World Cup qualifier against the Netherlands earlier this month.

The incident occurred on Saturday when Porte pulled de Bilde's shirt to try and stop him from rushing towards goal as Anderlecht's Par Zetterberg took a penalty.

De Bilde wrestled himself free from Porte, swung round and felled Porte with a left hook to the face in front of television cameras.

The referee did not see the incident and de Bilde, who already has to stand trial for another assault, completed the match without even a warning.

He head-butted a male nurse and punched another last year when he was denied access to a hospital room where his father had been taken following his brain haemorrhage in August 1995.

He also received a suspended two-year jail sentence in 1992 for head-butting two boy scout leaders.

The manager of Anderlecht has suggested de Bilde see a psychiatrist.

Jordan, Pippen lead Bulls past Nets

CHICAGO (R) — Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen combined for 20 points in a second-quarter run as the Chicago Bulls rebounded from a 16-point first-quarter deficit to trounce the New Jersey Nets, 113-81 on Monday.

Jordan finished with 24 points and Pippen 20 for Chicago (24-31), which has won seven straight games.

Kendall Gill and Kerry Kittles scored 19 points apiece for the Nets, who have lost six of their last seven games.

In Houston, Sherman Douglas scored eight of his 19 points in the first quarter as the Milwaukee Bucks took the lead midway through the period and never trailed, handing the Houston Rockets their fourth straight loss, 81-76.

Vin Baker scored 17 points and Ray Allen added 16 points for the Bucks, winners of five of their last seven. Hakim Olajuwon scored 37 points for Houston (21-61).

At Minnesota, rookie Stephen Marbury scored a season-high 33 points and keyed a third-quarter run as the Minnesota Timberwolves knocked off the Utah Jazz, 107-98.

Terry Porter added a season-high 20 points for the Timberwolves, who have beaten Western Conference powerhouses Los Angeles and Utah consecutively after losing three in a row. Minnesota became the first team in 13 games to reach 100 points against Utah.

Karl Malone had 22 points and Bryon Russell added 15 for the Jazz.

In New York, Patrick Ewing scored 12 of his 17 points in the second half and the New York Knicks used a 9-0 run to break a tie and go on to win their third straight game, 82-76 over the Atlanta Hawks.

Allan Houston scored 16 points and Chris Childs had 15 for the Knicks (19-7). Charles Oakley had nine points and a season-high 18 rebounds for New York.

In Orlando, Rony Seikaly scored 13 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter as the Orlando Magic ended a five-game losing streak with an 89-84 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers, who had their five-game winning streak ended.

Horace Grant added 20 points and 12 rebounds for the Magic, who were held

to an NBA-record low 57 points by Cleveland on Dec. 4.

"We got hurt inside," said Cleveland head coach Mike Fratello. "There is no question, we gave up the second shot opportunities to Orlando. The number of times that they scored was the result of the offensive rebounds."

In San Antonio, Alonzo Mourning scored 16 of his 32 points in the first quarter as the Miami Heat won their 12th straight road game with a 90-79 defeat of the San Antonio Spurs, who lost all-star centre David Robinson for six weeks with another injury.

Voshon Lenard added 16 points for the Heat. Miami moved within four of the all-time road winning streak, set by the 1971-72 Los Angeles Lakers.

In Phoenix, Bryant Stith scored 36 points, including a three-pointer with 15 remaining to send the game into overtime, and the Denver Nuggets went on a 7-0 run in the extra session, holding on to edge the Phoenix Suns, 112-109.

Dale Ellis scored 24 points and Antonio McDyess added 22 for Denver. Rex Chapman scored nine of his 18 points in overtime.

In Portland, Juwan Howard scored 13 of his 25 points in the second quarter and Chris Webber added 25 and 11 rebounds as the Washington Bullets concluded a successful road trip with a 106-84 rout of the Portland Trail Blazers.

Rod Strickland had 17 points and 10 assists in his return to Portland after he was dealt to Washington in the off-season. Tracy Murray added 18 points and eight rebounds for the Bullets, who went 4-2 on their road trip.

In Sacramento, Mitch Richmond scored 23 points and Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf



Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan tries to prevent Kendall Gill of the New Jersey Nets from penetrating his team's defences (AFP photo)

added 20 as the Sacramento Kings won their season-high third straight victory, 100-88 over the Los Angeles

Clippers. Olden Polynice had 14 points and 14 rebounds and Michael Smith grabbed 12

boards for the Kings, who led 29-16 after one quarter and headed into half-time with a 22-point lead.

Christmas a welcome break for Austrians

ALTA BADIA, Italy (R) — Christmas comes as a welcome break for Austrian Alpine skiers facing resurgent rivals and the return of the Alberto Tomba show.

The Austrian men, who started the week with the top four places in a World Cup downhill and victory in a super-giant slalom, had much to ponder as they headed home without the awesome air of invincibility they had before.

Although Thomas Sykora won the slalom in Madonna di Campiglio on Tuesday, ahead of world champion Tomba who returned from injury with a second place, the threatened Austrian avalanche turned out to be a false alarm.

They still dominated the overall World Cup — a title that the Austrian men's team has not won since Karl Schranz in 1970 — with Hans Knauss staying comfortably ahead after a fourth place in a giant slalom in Alta Badia on Sunday.

But the Swiss, the French and the Italians all showed they were ready for the battles ahead in a week when the best of the rest cut the Austrians down to size a bit.

Frenchman Luc Alphand took over the lead in the men's downhill standings from Fritz Strobl, winner in Val d'Isere on Dec. 14 while Swiss Michael Von Gruenigen grabbed his first win of the season to overtake Knauss in the giant slalom.

"The Franco-Italian alliance against the Austrians really worked here," joked Italy's Kristian Ghedina after he and Alphand each won a downhill at Val Gardena.

Josef Strobl finished third in the second of two men's downhill runs at Val Gardena on Saturday but otherwise the Austrian "Eagle Knights" had to watch others celebrate.

To add to their discomfort, Claudia Riegler — who has dual nationality and races for New Zealand after disagreeing with the Austrian federation — took her second World Cup win of the season in a slalom at Crans Montana on Saturday.

Nobody is under any illusions about the Austrians and they are sure to be back with a vengeance after the break. "The Austrians are still the team to beat," said Alphand.

China league says no infringement on rights of NBA

BEIJING (R) — Organisers of China's fledgling basketball league known as the CNBA said on Tuesday they had not infringed on the rights of the U.S. National Basketball Association (NBA).

The initials CNBA used by the Chinese league were based on its English language name — the Chinese New Basketball Alliance — and were not an infringement of the U.S. league's name, said the CNBA's organiser, Spectrum Company.

The new organisation has faced questions from supporters and detractors alike over the choice of its English language name since it is known in Chi-

nese as the men's professional basketball league.

Zhong Tianfa, a senior Chinese sports official, said there was no attempt to capitalise on the better known American league.

"The logo and name are both different (from the NBA), so we will pay no attention (to suggestions to the contrary)," he said in a statement issued through Hong Kong-based Spectrum.

Chinese sports officials in association with Spectrum launched the professional league this year in a bid to popularise basketball in this country of 1.2 billion people.

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Eight-year-old Ihab Jamal helps his father to select a turkey in Beirut's market on Tuesday for a traditional Christmas dinner (Reuters photo)

Fewer people visit Holy Land this year for Christmas; tourism industry is hit

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — If a Christmas tree fell in an Israeli forest, would anyone be there to hear it?

That is the question tour operators, airlines and hotels — faced with a slump in overseas tourism — are asking this Christmas.

Hotel bookings are down as much as 20 per cent from last year, while airlines are facing similar slowdowns. Air France, Tower Air and El Al experienced a significant drop in December reservations.

Many blame the stalled peace talks between Israel and Palestinians, which have heightened tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbours, as well as the spring bus bombings and deadly Israeli-Palestinian clashes this fall.

The political uncertainty has "dealt a serious blow" to Israel tourism, said Mark Feldman of Jerusalem's Zion Tours travel agency. His company logged 25 per cent fewer reservations this year than in 1995.

"The tourism ministry is doing its best in a bad situation to let people know Israel tourism exists," Mr. Feldman said. "But we're talking about reality. People have been killed; bombs have blown up. When riots take place, they're reported worldwide."

The ministry of tourism expects December figures to be between 10 to 20 per cent lower than last year, spokeswoman Orly Doron said Tuesday.

"We just hope this year's terrorism will not carry into next year," she said. Hotels have suffered a 10 per cent lag in December bookings, according to the Jerusalem Hotel Association. The American Colony Hotel reported a sales decline of 20 per cent.

"We have to fight bad publicity we get free of charge," said Jonathan Harpaz, the hotel association director. "The media portrays the area as a war zone. That's just not true." Airlines have reported decreased bookings throughout the year. El Al, Israel's national airline, reported a \$100 million decrease in ticket sales from last year.

"After the bus bombings, many tour operators around the world decided not to include Israel in their group packages," said Helen Gordon, a spokeswoman for Air France. Meanwhile, Bethlehem shop owners, who rely on the Christmas holidays to sustain them through lean months, also said they had fewer customers.

"The (political) situation doesn't encourage tourists," said Jack Giacaman, whose family runs an olive wood

factory that turns out hundreds of carved angels, sheep and baby Jesuses for Christian tourists.

"Economically, it's worse than the intifada,"

Tourists travelling to Bethlehem for Christmas Eve festivities Tuesday had to run a gauntlet of Israeli army checkpoints, sniper towers and barbed wire fences to reach Bethlehem's Manger Square, where they were greeted by armed Palestinian soldiers.

"It doesn't feel like Christmas," said one German tourist, who gave his name only as Jacob. Those who made it to the Holy Land said they were not afraid for their personal safety.

"You see hundreds of police and soldiers in the streets. The security here is very good," said Lai King Wa, a 31-year-old tourist from Hong Kong visiting Jerusalem.

Tourism workers hope new movement toward an agreement on an Israeli pull-out from the West Bank town of Hebron will help turn tourism around.

"The only thing you can do is tell the prime minister to sign the Hebron agreement," said Ilana Beradt, sales director at Jerusalem's Laromme Hotel. "Tourists will only come if there is peace."

Arabs devising plan to face Israeli nuclear attack, AAEA official says

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states have drawn up a draft emergency plan to face a possible Israeli nuclear attack in case of a fresh confrontation in the Middle East, a senior Arab nuclear official said on Tuesday.

Mahmoud Barakat, head of the Arab Atomic Energy Agency (AAEA), said he did not believe reports Israel had 200 nuclear warheads but added that the Jewish state possesses the capability to develop atomic weapons.

"There is a nuclear threat to us... We are moving in the direction of what is called an Arab emergency plan to face any kind of nuclear accidents," he told

the United Arab Emirates daily Al Bayan from his Damascus headquarters.

"Such a plan has been sent to Arab countries for study and it will be sent back to us to put it in its final shape and have it officially endorsed."

Mr. Barakat gave no details of the plan but said it focused on protection from nuclear radiation and teaching the public how to behave in case of a nuclear attack. He said they planned to hold a pan-Arab conference on such an issue.

"Nuclear weapons are not the end of the world... there are techniques for resistance and protection," he said.

"Our role (in AAEA) is to

create awareness and preparedness... but preparedness does not mean that we prepare for war but to make the people understand the danger of radiation effects and ways of protection."

Arab states have repeatedly voiced concern about Israel's atomic capabilities, accusing it of possessing more than 200 nuclear warheads. But Israel has neither denied nor confirmed such allegations.

Before the 1991 Middle East peace conference in Madrid, Israel and its Arab neighbours fought five major wars but they did not involve atomic weapons.

"Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons is not the

end of the road and the Arab countries and Israel know that," Mr. Barakat said.

"There have been books and studies in Israel saying the Arabs can stand a nuclear strike but Israel cannot for a clear reason."

"We can stand that strike because we are larger in area and population... nuclear bombs will not kill us all as 80 to 90 per cent of us will be left. On the Israeli side, the vice versa is true."

Mr. Barakat did not say whether Arab states could develop atomic bombs but added that such weapons would not provide "the final solution to any problem."

Nahar journalist held over anti-Syria attack

BEIRUT (AFP) — A reporter of an independent Lebanese daily has been arrested in connection with the investigation into an anti-Syrian attack last week, the newspaper said on Tuesday.

Pierre Attallah, a reporter of Al Nahar, was arrested Monday night, one of scores of people detained, mainly among the Christian opposition, since gunmen opened fire Wednesday on a Syrian minibus north of Beirut, killing the driver and injuring a passenger.

The newspaper said "visitors of the night" went to Mr. Attallah's home in Ashrafieh, a Christian area of Beirut, without an arrest warrant and threatened to use weapons to get into the apartment before the editor agreed to be taken.

International press freedom group Reporters sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders) said it has lodged a protest about Mr. Attallah's arrest with Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri.

The Paris-based group called on Mr. Hariri "to use his influence so the charges against Pierre Attallah are specified and he is freed immediately if his arrest is linked to his journalistic activity or his political opinions."

Attorney General Adnan Addum said on Monday that 22 people were still being detained over the recent anti-Syrian attacks.

Dory Chamoun, leader of the Christian opposition

National Liberal Party (NLP), condemned the minibus attack. "The opposition I represent does not shoot against Syrians or anyone else," he said.

"We are against all violence that attacks the security of the life of Lebanese or non-Lebanese," he said in an interview published in Al Nahar.

He said last week that most of the arrested people were supporters of the disbanded Lebanese forces militia of jailed former warlord Samir Geagea or of general Michel Aoun, who headed a military government from 1983 to 1990.

Some of them were also NLP members. On the same day as the minibus attack, two members of the Syrian intelligence services were wounded in an explosion in Tripoli, hospital sources said, although a Syrian military spokesman later denied any casualties.

A week earlier, a vehicle carrying Syrian workers in Antelias in the Christian suburbs of Beirut was the target of a grenade attack.

Al Nahar is one of the few newspapers in Lebanon to have reported on the arrests and the subsequent protests of Christian opposition leaders.

However, its owner Ghassan Tueni said in a television broadcast on Sunday that Al Nahar, like most Lebanese newspapers, did not report on Thursday the minibus attack at the request of the authorities.

Ocalan calls for dialogue

DIYABAKIR (R) — Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan renewed calls for a lasting solution to 12 years of conflict in southeast Turkey in a television interview broadcast on Monday.

"I want there to be a way for dialogue in 1997. Without putting forward any pre-conditions, I invite the Turkish state to a solution of the Kurdish problem by political means," the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) chief said in the interview broadcast by Belgian-based MED-TV. Mr. Ocalan said Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan had made various initiatives for dialogue with the rebels after he came to power in June, but that these had since been abandoned.

Turkish governments and the military have often refused direct negotiations with the PKK, which they regard as a terrorist group. A unilateral rebel ceasefire declared last year was ignored by Turkey.

Mr. Ocalan said the PKK was trying to find a party leader or government official with whom they could talk and repeated assurances that he had dropped demands for a separate Kurdish state on Turkish soil. "I want the problem to be solved by political means, within Turkey's national borders," he said.

Mr. Ocalan, also known as "Apo", threatened more suicide bombings in Turkey's major cities if what he called the repression of the Kurdish people continued.

"This time we will send hundreds of guerrillas into the big cities. It's not a difficult thing for a guerrilla with a bomb to get on a bus or a plane, or infiltrate into a crowded place," he said.

Ten people, mostly members of the security forces, were killed in two suicide bombings in Turkish cities at the end of October and 10 soldiers were killed by a human bomb in eastern Turkey in July.

Egypt says it is victim of drug-smuggling conspiracy

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt has been the victim of foreign plots to swamp it with drugs, Interior Minister Hassan Al Alfi said, amid reports of Israeli attempts to smuggle heroin into the country.

"Foreign conspiracies have been hatched to submerge the country with hallucinogenic plants," General Alfi said at a police academy meeting Monday evening.

He said the plots were aimed transforming Egypt into a drug producing country

"to destroy its economy and its youth."

(Egyptian authorities) have prevented a large number of attempts to smuggle the drugs across the Suez Canal and several other points," Gen. Alfi said.

An Egyptian convicted of spying for Israel said a Mossad secret service officer asked him to take 12 kilograms of heroin into Egypt in November 1993, just before his arrest. Al Ahram newspaper reported on Tuesday.

"The contraband operations took place in the middle of the night in a mountainous region only two kilometres from the Egyptian-Israeli border," said Amer Salman, who was sentenced to hard labour for life on the spying charges.

"Israeli intelligence services are continuing their operations to infiltrate the drugs into Egypt," the government newspaper quoted him as saying.

His comments follow a report in Britain's Sunday Times newspaper that the Israeli army sold tonnes of

Lebanese hashish to Egyptian soldiers for nearly 20 years in an attempt to undermine the Egyptian army.

The Israeli army issued a statement on Sunday denying the allegations and claiming that the article was both "false and malicious."

The Sunday Times said the operation, code named Lahav ("blade" in Hebrew) started in the 1960s and continued until the end of the 1980s.

2 British nurses charged with murder in S. Arabia

LONDON (AFP) — Two British nurses have been charged in Saudi Arabia with the murder of an Australian nurse, the Saudi embassy in London said Tuesday.

The British Press Association identified the nurses as Deborah Perry, 36, from the Midlands, and Lucille McLaughlin, 34, from Glasgow.

The foreign office had been pressuring Saudi authorities for information on the case since the nurses were arrested Friday in connection with the murder of Yvonne Gilford, 55, a senior operating room nurse at King Fahd military medical complex in Dhahran.

Gilford was reportedly stabbed four times, battered with a hammer and smothered. Her body was found in her dormitory room at the hospital on Dec. 11.

The Saudi embassy here said in a statement that the two nurses "are going to meet with a representative of the British embassy later in the day (Tuesday)."

"There will be a trial which will examine the case in detail," Under Islamic law which rules in Saudi Arabia, if the

two nurses were found guilty of murder, they could be subject to public decapitation.

The embassy statement said, "at this point it is premature, pointless and counter-productive to speculate about the possible judgement of the court."

The Saudi government will ensure justice for all concerned," it said.

Sources said the Saudi police confined the 1,600 staff members to the hospital and confiscated passports from foreign nationals.

Human rights groups say that Saudi Arabia has one of the world's worst records for arbitrary justice.

Stephen Jakobi, director of the British rights group fair trials abroad, said, "Saudi Arabia is one of those countries for which international treaty protection does not run."

"This is in keeping with the Saudi's contempt of foreigners' rights to rule of law and international convention."

In Riyadh earlier Tuesday, British Consul-General William Benby said Tim Lamb, the British consul based in Riyadh, had left for Dhahran after receiving Saudi permission to visit the two nurses.

COLUMN 8

Duchess of York prefers chocolates for gifts

LONDON (AP) — Let them eat chocolates. Deeply indebted to the royal bankers, the Duchess of York has decided to limit her Christmas gifts to hand-made chocolates. The Daily Mirror reported Monday. Only her children, Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie, will get other presents, the newspaper said.

The tabloid, which gave no source for its story, said that Sarah, the ex-wife of Queen Elizabeth's son Andrew, is expected to stay at the Queen's Sandringham estate over Christmas but is not expected to join the royal family. The duchess, 37, was divorced from Prince Andrew in May. She is said to be considering opportunities in television and as a corporate spokeswoman.

Wal-Mart workers fired for hiding elms

SAN ANTONIO (R) — Two employees of a Wal-Mart store were fired for hiding tinkle me elmo dolls from customers so they could buy them for themselves, the store manager said. The two were turned in by angry customers who saw them buying the popular dolls. "They took the items that were meant for customers, hid them within the store and purchased them later," he told Reuters. Wal-Mart spokesman said it was the first time any employees of the retail giant had been fired for an incident related to the fuzzy red "Sesame Street" character, which says, "Ooh, that tickles," giggles and shakes when its stomach is touched.

Meditating Buddhist snubs mountain rescue team

DOLGELLAU (R) — A Buddhist who climbed a Welsh mountain to spend the winter solstice weekend communing with nature was rudely interrupted when a helicopter and search team arrived to rescue him. Rescue workers interrupted their Christmas party to scale Cader Idris in north Wales after another climber told police he had seen a man there with a head injury. When the rescue helicopter picked out the man with a searchlight and guided him to the ground, the 50-year-old man told them to go away.

FBI returns engagement ring from TWA wreckage

NEW YORK (R) — After months of waiting, a Connecticut woman Monday received the diamond engagement ring her fiancée was carrying when he was killed in the crash of TWA flight 800. FBI lead investigator gave Julie Stuart the 1.6-karat diamond ring salvaged from floating in the Atlantic Ocean in its maroon box July 18, one day after plane went down. "I think it was pretty miraculous that it was found at all — it's so small in a huge ocean — so I think it was meant for me to have it," Stuart told reporters. The 31-year-old personnel manager was going to marry Andrew Krukar, one of the 230 victims of the crash.

Colombia saint stolen, faithful threaten to starve

BOGOTA (R) — Churchgoers in a northern Colombian town threatened to stage a mass hunger strike after thieves stole their patron saint, television reported. Worshippers in San Cayetano, the town named after the saint, packed into the humble parish church and said they would starve themselves unless the evil-doers returned the stolen statuette. "These bad people must bring San Cayetano back otherwise God will certainly punish them," one Catholic worshipper in the town in Bolivar province told the Noticiero Nacional news programme. Sixteen churches have been robbed in the area in recent weeks.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Court upholds ban on headscarves

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's highest administrative tribunal has suspended a ruling allowing female lawyers to wear Islamic headscarves in court, the Anatolia news agency reported Tuesday. A department of the council of state unanimously issued the suspension at the request of the Union of Turkish Bars (TBB) as an interim measure pending a definitive ruling. Anatolia said. The justice ministry issued a circular in November allowing female lawyers to conduct cases wearing Islamic headscarves, a practice which had been banned by the TBB. Justice Minister Sevkî Kalkan is a close ally of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan. The council of state said the justice ministry was "not competent to decide on lawyers' dress" during trials, adding that the matter fell within the authority of the TBB.

Leader of Sephardic Jews hospitalised

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual leader of Israel's Sephardic Jewish community, was hospitalised here on Tuesday, suffering from a high fever and exhaustion, the national news agency Itim reported. Doctors at Jerusalem's Hadassah hospital said Rabbi Yosef, who is in his 70s, would undergo a series of medical examinations. As head of the Sephardic community of Middle Eastern Jews, Rabbi Yosef is also the spiritual guide of the ultra-orthodox Shas party, which won an unprecedented 10 seats in parliament in Israel's May elections. During the election campaign, Rabbi Yosef supported right-wing Likud Party candidate Benjamin Netanyahu for prime minister.

Mortar kills 2 in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU (AFP) — A mortar shell killed at least two people and wounded three others at K-4 in south Mogadishu on Tuesday, signalling the start of renewed fighting for the Somali capital, militia sources said.

Three other mortars landed in a nearby neighbourhood, but caused no casualties or damage to property, although it forced a few families, who had earlier fled the area and had only just returned, to flee again.

The mortar shells were widely believed to have been fired by militiamen of clan warlord Osman Hassan Ali "Ato", based in the former U.S. embassy compound in south Mogadishu, but the faction has continued to deny involvement.

Observers here believe that it was in retaliation to earlier heavy shelling of Ato positions by forces of Hussein Muhammad Aided.

The two warring lead rival armed factions in the United Somali Congress/Somali National Alliance (USC/SNA), battling for the control of south